



Questions

By Jon Sievert

How did Brad Gillis get that rapid, yet smooth-rising harmonic up nearly a fifth on the last note of his solo to Night Ranger's "Sentimental Street" [Seven Sisters]?

—Henry Lai, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Starting with the tremolo bar of his red '62 Stratocaster in the bottom (depressed) position, Brad says he struck the harmonic at the 3rd fret on the G-string and pulled the bar up as far as he could, to a high G. The key to this trick lies in a modification to the guitar similar to that

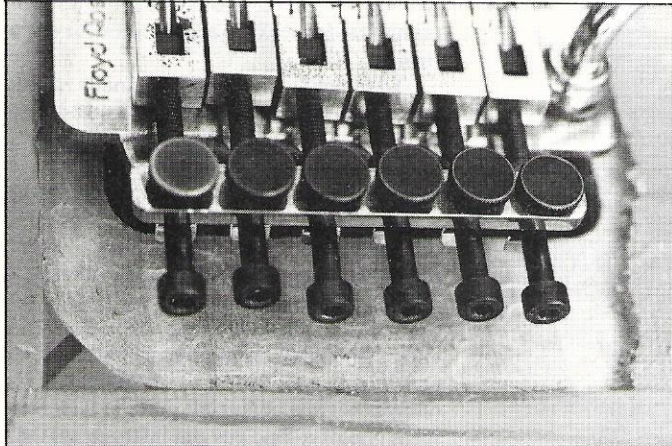


Fig. 1

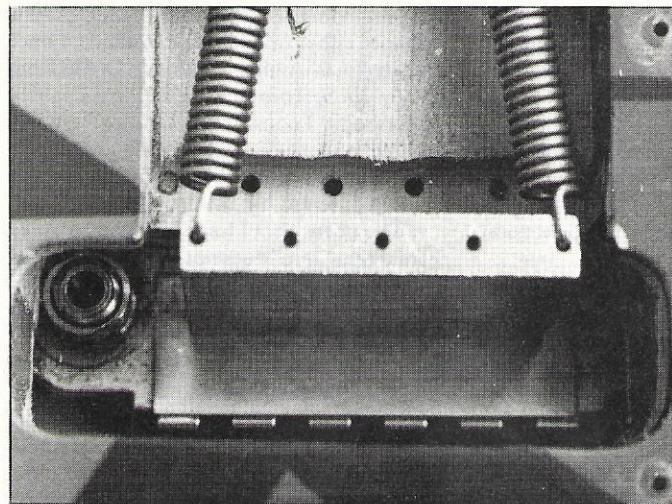


Fig. 2

shown in Fig. 1. An area perhaps 1/4" deep is routed under the Floyd Rose tailpiece to allow more clearance when the bar is pulled up. Further cutting may be necessary inside the back cavity to allow the sustain block to move freely (Fig. 2).

I have continually heard that balancing the switch between two pickups on a Stratocaster puts them out of phase. In fact they are very much *in* phase. How did this untruth become so commonly accepted?

—Dan Hayes, San Francisco, CA

You are correct that the two pickups remain *electrically* in phase, but because the resulting sound approximates that of out-of-phase

pickups, the term became widely associated with Stratocasters and other three-pickup models. The thinner, sweeter sound produced by the pickup combination of middle/bridge or middle/neck is somewhat similar to the tone produced on a two-pickup model (such as a Les Paul) that's wired out of phase. Dan Smith of Fender says that he started hearing the term "out of phase" applied to Strats in the late '60s, about the time players started putting phase switches on their Les Pauls to approximate the Strat sound.

What has happened to bassist Rudy Sarzo since he left Quiet Riot?

—Joshua Kelly, San Francisco, CA

About a year ago, Rudy reunited with his former Ozzy Osbourne bandmate, drummer Tommy Aldridge, with the idea of putting together their own band. They have since recruited guitarist Tony MacAlpine and vocalist Rob Rock to form Driver. The band is now in the studio and expects to have an album ready for fall release.

What is the difference between a "peak" and an "RMS" power rating for an amplifier? Can they be compared?

—Rhonda Cline, Miami, FL

Without taking speakers into account, an amp is capable of creating a set maximum amount of power in short bursts; this is what is known as the peak power rating. That number can be misleading, however, because an amp can't endure extended periods of peak operation. An alternative way of rating is the RMS (root mean square) value, which represents the average wattage output during one complete cycle. It is the most practical measure of power, since it describes what the amp can deliver regularly and consistently. If you know the RMS rating and wish to convert it to peak, multiply the RMS value by 1.41. To obtain RMS value from peak value, multiply the peak amount by .707. Don't use either of these values as your sole guide to the amount of sound an amp ultimately delivers, however. Power depends on many factors that go beyond mere voltage output from the amp to the speakers. The type of enclosure, number of speakers, impedance of the speakers, and the frequency of the sound being amplified all play a part. The best way to compare amplifiers is to place them side-by-side and play through them.

I recently heard an album by someone named Gabby Pahinui playing in a style called slack key. Could you tell me something about the style?

—Danny Schmidt, Kansas City, MO

Slack key, or *ki ho'alu*, guitar is a style indigenous to the Hawaiian Islands. Believed to have been invented by Hawaiian cowboys more than 100 years ago, the style is characterized by the loosening (or slackening) of some or all of the strings to produce strong bass resonance. The guitar is typically tuned to an open triad—particularly G, E, and C major—though other tunings are often employed, and the instrument is played fingerstyle. The late Gabby Pahinui was one of its most distinguished practitioners and, in fact, played on Ry Cooder's *Chicken Skin Music* [Reprise, 2254] in 1976. Some other prominent players include Leonard Kwan, Alice Namakelua, Leland Isaacs, Keola Beamer, Sonny Chillingworth, and Ledward Kaapana. Further information on slack key and some its players can be found in *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, a 544-page history by George S. Kanahele [University Press of Hawaii, 535 Ward Ave., Honolulu, HI 96814].

Send your questions to:

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