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Guitar Player

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NEW LIFE WITH THE DEAD

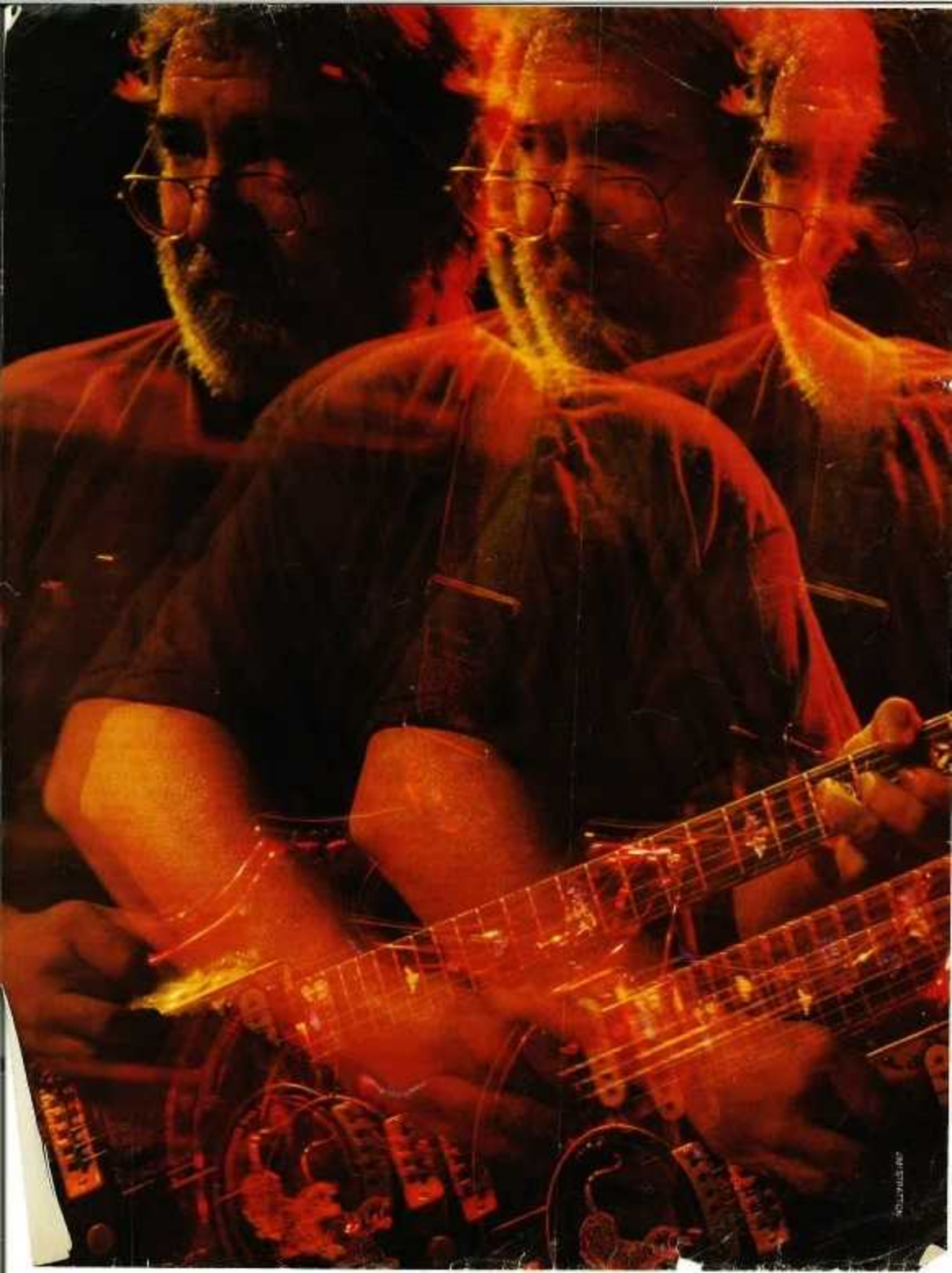
WHEN JERRY GARCIA COLLAPSED INTO A diabetic coma two years ago this month, Grateful Dead fans—a.k.a. Deadheads—the world over held their collective breath. Not only were they concerned for the well-being of their beloved hero, but for the loss of an entire lifestyle, as well. For more than 20 years, Garcia's graceful single-line modal improvisations and thin, quavery vocals had been *the* voice of the Grateful Dead; if there were any single member whose loss would certainly spell the end of this unique American institution, surely it was he.

But, of course, Garcia and the Dead not only survived, they have thrived. In the year-and-a-half since his return to action, the Dead has produced its first Top-10 single ("Touch Of Grey"), a platinum LP (*In The Dark*), and a #1 hour-long music video (*So Far*). Outside the Dead, the 45-year-old guitarist also took his own electric band and a new acoustic band to Broadway, selling out 17 shows in record-setting time at New York's Lunt-Fontanne Theatre.

Continued

BY JON SIEVERT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STANLEY MOUSE



JERRY GARCIA

All of this has brought the band a certain sort of, well, respectability among the establishment media. There have been cover stories in *USA Today* and *Rolling Stone* (which virtually snubbed—even disdained—the band for more than 10 years), *Forbes* examined their unusual path to success, and *People* magazine picked Garcia as one its most intriguing personalities of 1987. Grateful Dead videos are even aired on MTV.

This new-found attention and success has had little effect on the way the band has always gone about its business, however. Long ago, the Grateful Dead created its own universe, which, as Garcia says, has its own parameters and goals. Where conventional music-business wisdom dictates that touring is a money-losing proposition embarked on only to support record sales, the Dead has literally survived on ticket sales. Until "Touch Of Grey," the band never had anything near a Top-40 single, although two albums produced in 1970—*Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*—have sold steadily enough over the years to be certified platinum (1,000,000 units sold). Nevertheless, for years the band has played about 100 concerts annually, selling out coliseums and stadiums with virtually no advertising beyond the Grateful Dead Hotline—an array of answering machines that provide tour and ticket information around the clock [(415) 457-8388 in the West; (201) 777-8653 in the East]. And where most bands actively prohibit and police taping of concerts by fans, the Dead actually provide a special section for tapers at all of their performances, which last up to three hours.

According to Garcia, the Grateful Dead has always considered the audience an integral part of the band, recognizing that one could not exist without the other. This kind of loyalty and identification has created a subgenre of Deadheads that literally follow the band around the country to all its shows. Other manifestations of this devoted loyalty include a well-written fan magazine, *The Golden Road* [484 Lake Park Ave., Oakland, CA 94610], and a periodically updated computer data base called *Dead Base* [Box 499, Hanover, NH 03755], which includes a complete history of Grateful Dead set lists starting with 1965. In addition, David Gans, author of an excellent "oral and visual portrait" of the Dead, *Playing In The Band* [St. Martins Press, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010], hosts a nationally syndicated radio program called the *Deadhead Hour*. There's even been a book about Deadheads, *Grateful Dead: The Official Book Of The Dead Heads* [William Morrow, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016].

It's been nearly a decade since Garcia last appeared in *Guitar Player* as the October '78 cover story. In a sense, little has changed and much has changed over the intervening years. Except for the addition of keyboardist Brent Mydland in 1979, the band's lineup remains intact: Garcia, rhythm guitarist Bob Weir, bassist Phil Lesh, and drummer/percussionists Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann. Never a particularly prolific recording band, the Dead only managed to produce one studio LP, 1980's disappointing *Go To Heaven*, between 1979 and 1987's *In The Dark*, though several aborted attempts were made. Conventional wisdom among the Deadhead network focused on various bandmembers' personal problems, including drug dependency, as primary contributing factors. By the end of '84, members of the band and the Dead family had become so concerned about Jerry's downward-spiraling health that they confronted him and asked him to get help. In January 1985, Garcia was busted for drug possession in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. He managed to beat the rap, and by most accounts, little changed.

On July 10, 1986, Jerry's body made the decision for him. Two days after the end of a short tour on which the Dead shared the bill with Bob Dylan, Garcia dropped into a diabetic coma. "The symptoms were all there," he recalls, "but I didn't recognize them. I was thirsty all the time, which meant I was dehydrated. When the doctors took a blood sample in the hospital, it was thick as mud." When he came out of the coma, he began an extended period of rehabilitation, learning to walk, talk, and play guitar again. "The neuro pathways were still there, but I had to learn to reconnect everything," he says. Gradually, things came back together, though he admits that it is still an ongoing process. Indeed, it is a jolt to hear this well-read, extremely articulate man occasionally groping for words. "That's part of the fallout—I have to hunt for words. I used to have instant access."

"It took a while before I had a sense of how music worked. I had to reconstruct all that. It was three or four months before I could play in front of somebody."

Three months after his collapse, Garcia was ready to take his first tentative steps back into the performing arena, making a guest appearance on Halloween with Weir's band, Bobby And The Midnites. On December 15, 1986, the Dead was reunited, opening with "Touch Of Grey" as the crowd emotionally sang along on its prophetic chorus: "I will get by. I will *survive*." With hard drugs and bad health behind him, Garcia's return revitalized the Grateful Dead.

In January 1987, the band rented the Marin Veterans Auditorium in their hometown of San Rafael, California, and in two weeks smoothly laid down the basic tracks for *In The Dark*. According to Garcia, who co-produced the album with longtime Dead associate John Cutler, the secret to success was approaching the sessions like a live concert. The band set up onstage before the empty house just as it would for a show and played as if they were performing for a packed house. All electric instruments were plugged directly into the mixing board of a mobile recording unit; vocals and sound effects were overdubbed later. The subsequent release of "Touch Of Grey" and its rapid ascent up the charts began the media blitz.

Since then, Jerry Garcia has been a very busy man. In addition to the hectic Grateful Dead touring schedule, which included a midsummer 1987 stadium tour backing up Bob Dylan, Garcia's long-running electric band has stayed active, and he's formed the new acoustic group. His onstage demeanor has changed dramatically from moody and withdrawn to active and joyous, which is reflected in his guitar playing. He truly seems to have found new life with the Dead. And early this year, alto saxophone legend Ornette Coleman invited Jerry to join him in the studio for work on his latest album, *Virgin Beauty*. In the midst of all this, much of his important out-of-print early solo and ensemble work with artists outside of the Grateful Dead has begun to reappear on compact disc. Available once again are *Garcia*, his first solo album; *Hooteroll?*, with keyboardist Howard Wales; and *Live At The Keystone*, with keyboardist Merle Saunders.

We finally caught up with Jerry in March for this wide-ranging interview, in which he discusses the effects of his illness, his ongoing learning process about guitar, and his working relationship with the Grateful Dead, which he calls "the longest running experiment in rock and roll."

* * * *

DID YOUR HOSPITAL STAY MARK THE longest period in 25 to 30 years in which didn't have your hands on a guitar?

Yeah, that's right. I don't feel comfortable without at least poking around on the sucker every couple of days. More than that, it starts to slip away.

How long did that period last?

Well, I was in the hospital for about three weeks. I had Steve [Parish, see accompanying story, page 89] bring in my Steinberger, and I started to poke around a little bit while I was still in the hospital—but just a little. Then after I got out of the hospital, Merle Saunders and [bassist] John Kahn came up to my house a couple of times a week and made me practice. Merle would bring music, and we'd play through the changes of standards and stuff like that. Gradually, I started to pick it up again. At first it was very stiff and mechanical. I could figure things out up to a point, but it took a while before I really had a sense of how music worked. I had to kind of reconstruct all that. It was about a three- or four-month process before I felt like I was playing well enough where I could play in front of somebody. I knew I wasn't playing as well as I remembered that I had been able to, but I wanted to play.

So it wasn't really a matter of not playing for three or four weeks. There was actually damage to your memory?

Oh yeah, I had some damage. The damage part was worse than the three or four weeks. The three or four weeks seemed *much* longer. But the blessing about losing hunks of your memory is that you don't get too hung up over what you don't remember, because it's gone. It's not a question of, "What

Continued on page 92

Steve Parish On The Care & Feeding Of Garcia's Gear

By Jon Sievert

AMONG DEADHEADS, STEVE PARISH is almost as fabled as Jerry Garcia. The burly, 6' 4" guitar technician has been a member of the Grateful Dead crew since 1969, and for the past decade he has been responsible for the care and well-being of both Garcia's and Bob Weir's equipment. Much of Steve's notoriety, however, stems from his other duties, which include keeping over-zealous Deadheads off the stage during concerts. His long-distance tosses are legendary.

Parish, 38, has also been responsible for Garcia's guitars and equipment with the Jerry Garcia Band since 1970. "I was doing drums and PA work with the Dead when Jerry started his band," he recalls. "Since I was the youngest guy around and it was an extra job, I kind of got elected. Jerry basically taught me what I know about guitars, although I learned a lot from Ramrod, too. He took care of guitars for the Dead until we switched jobs in 1978." Now Parish not only maintains Garcia's equipment, but manages and books the Jerry Garcia Band, as well.

Over the course of nearly two decades, Steve has seen Garcia go through a number of equipment changes, though not nearly as many as most guitarists he knows of. "He's only played four or five different guitars since I've been working for him," says Parish. "And we've had the Tiger on the road for almost 11 years now." The Tiger is Garcia's custom-built instrument that was designed and constructed by Doug Irwin [744 Dutton Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95047]. It gets its nickname from the brass and mother-of-pearl tiger inlaid in ebony on the guitar's face. The instrument has an arched top and back and rounded sides, and is fashioned from cocobolo, maple, and vermilion with solid brass binding on the fingerboard and outlining the pickups. Its two DiMarzio Super 2 humbucking and one DiMarzio SDS-1 single-coil pickups are equipped with phase switches and controlled by a 5-way selector switch.

Electronically, the guitar is wired with two output jacks, one stereo—which serves as an effects loop—and one mono (see diagram). Before the signal from the pickups reaches the cable, it first passes through a unity-gain, op-amp buffer/amplifier to protect the signal from losing high end as the impedance load changes when the effects are kicked in. A double-pole/double-throw switch then directs the signal in one of two directions. In one position, it is fed directly to the volume control and out through the mono jack that feeds Garcia's preamp and power amp. In the other position, however, the signal travels down one wire of a stereo cord to an effects rack that patches any or all effects into the chain and then sends it back up the other wire of the cord to the guitar. It then passes though a master volume and out through the mono jack to the preamp and power amp. This arrangement allows Jerry to preset effects before starting a tune and kick them in or out with either a footswitch or a switch on the guitar. "That guitar is really like an art piece," says Steve. "I love taking care of it because it's such a one-of-a-kind thing. I literally keep it with me all the time when Jerry doesn't have it. It's like a good friend. Jerry's spare is a Modulus Graphite Blackknife that's identically wired, but he's practically never played it. I'm going to have Doug build another guitar that will be more of a workingman's model."

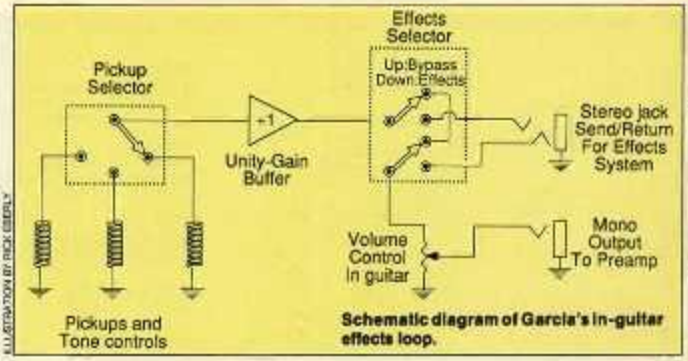


ILLUSTRATION BY RICK GIBBS

Schematic diagram of Garcia's in-guitar effects loop.

JON SIEVERT

Steve Parish sets up Garcia's gear prior to a concert.

As for effects, amplifiers, and speakers, Garcia likes to keep it simple, according to Steve. "He's always liked the front-end sound of a Fender, so we have a Twin Reverb pre-amped out to a McIntosh 2300 300-watt stereo power amp and three 12" JBL E120 speakers. That's his bottom line. Then he has an effects rack that we designed with [Dead electronic wizard] John Cutler's help. Most of it is stuff that's pretty hard to get now because it's so old. Jerry loves the way it all sounds, but he really doesn't need gimmicks and gadgetry; he can get nearly any sound with just his hands." The rack includes an ADA Analog Delay that's been modified to work with Ernie Ball volume pedals, an MXR Pitch Transposer, a Boss Heavy Metal HM-2, a Mu-tron Octave Divider, a Mu-tron III envelope-following filter, an MXR Distortion Plus, and an MXR Phase 100. "We used to go on shopping trips for effects and come home with our arms loaded, but that's changed," says Parish. "There just aren't that many gadgets out there. Jerry knows when he doesn't like something right away and gets rid of it quick. When he likes something, he takes a lot of time to feel it out before he puts it into his working setup."

Steve has immense respect for Garcia's knowledge of his equipment and his ability to spot trouble: "He has an amazing sense of what's wrong with his stuff. He always knows right where the trouble is. I've learned to totally rely on his sense. He's turned around and told me things like, 'The house voltage just dropped a couple of volts.' And I'm going, 'How does he know that? How can anybody tell that from playing guitar?' But, sure enough, we'd check it out and he'd direct us to a problem we didn't know existed. And if something goes wrong, he always knows what's happening behind him. So, if there's something to be done out there, you want to go at it as gently as possible. You've got to keep a cool head, because he's playing most of the time while you're trying to fix something. He's always in both places; he knows just what you're doing."

Because of Steve's long-standing familiarity with Garcia's equipment, and his meticulous preventive maintenance procedures,

GARCIA'S EQUIPMENT

trouble seldom appears. When it does, it's usually in the nature of a defective cord, a broken string, or a blown speaker. Nevertheless, the years have presented some unique situations: "Right after I started doing guitars for the Garcia band, Jerry was playing an old Fender Stratocaster, and the plastic plate that holds the knobs broke while he was playing and they all fell off the guitar. We had to rig up a quick template on the spot. Another time, a totally naked guy jumped out of the audience and came running out from the side of the stage toward Jerry. He tripped and fell on Jerry's AC box and crushed all the prongs. We grabbed the guy and tossed him offstage before Jerry ever saw what happened. He turned around and yelled, 'What happened to all my stuff?' I said, 'This naked guy just came running up . . . .' And he said, '*What* naked guy?' He thought we were nuts."

According to Steve, the whole crew essentially works a 7-day week, grabbing days off here and there for themselves. "We're currently doing about 85 Dead shows a year. Then there are side bands and benefits and things like that. And when we're not doing shows, we've got practice, repairs, and maintenance." Still, life has gotten a little better from the early '70s, when the Dead hauled "The Wall"—an enormous sound system that employed 500 JBL speakers and 50 Mcintosh 2300 power amps. "The band's equipment and the PA were combined in the setup," he recalls. "We'd start at 8:00 A.M., and it would take two hours just to get all the equipment onto the stage. By noon we'd have the speakers stacked and we'd take a half-hour for lunch. Then we'd wire it and get all the amps running by 4:00 P.M. for the soundcheck. The show would start at about 8:00 P.M., and in those days, the band would play until 1:00 A.M. We left the hall around 4:00 A.M. The next day we'd travel all night and start again. There were the same number of guys on the crew that are doing the band's equipment now. These days we get to the venue at about 1:00 P.M. to get ready for a 4:00 P.M. soundcheck. We're usually loaded out by 1:30 A.M."

After 18 years, Parish has gotten to know his boss well, and he speaks admiringly of their relationship: "Working for Jerry is really a beautiful thing. He had to put up with a lot of real silly stuff when I was learning, but he was real patient; I'll always thank him for that. When the Grateful Dead started, they all had to hump their own gear, and he's never forgotten that, thank God. He understands the physical exertion and hours that we put in, and he's appreciative of it. Even when he was going through some of his worst times, he never forgot his relationship with the people who do his equipment. He's always kept that on the up-and-up. The melting point is where his playing and my job come together. He'll get mad and say something, but he never holds a grudge. He helps you work it out if there's a problem. I have a lot of fun doing my job, and there's a lot of great life that I've enjoyed that I could never have touched anywhere else. We're treated real good by these guys, and we try to treat them good."

JERRY GARCIA

Continued from page 88

is it I don't remember here? Is it something valuable?" It's gone. If it were something important, it doesn't matter anymore. Gradually everything sort of came back, but it wasn't without a certain amount of work. I had to do everything at least once to remind my muscles about how something worked. It was the thing of making the connection between mind and muscles, because I hadn't been away from playing for so long that my muscles had forgotten. The neuro pathways were there and the reason for doing it and why it worked—the intellectual part of it—was also there, but they were all separated. I had to pick them up like, here's a hunk of how music works, over here is a hunk of why I like to play it, and here's a hunk of my muscles knowing this stuff. It was a matter of putting my hands on the guitar and actually playing through tunes and trying to solve the problem of how the structure of each tune works—addressing the whole thing. That's what did it, but it took a while. I'm still in the process of rediscovery. I suddenly go, "Oh, right. Here's a whole area. I remember that year that I worked on this stuff." It tends to come back in chunks. But like I say, I don't remember what I don't remember. I'm not hung about it, and every time I discover something new, it's delightful.

Does the relearning process parallel your original learning process?

Well, there were actually a couple of different stages of my development. I didn't really start playing guitar significantly until the Grateful Dead started. I played a little in a band when I was in high school, but that was all pretty much in the first position. I played lines, but I was a dabbler. I loved playing, but I didn't know how to get from where I was to where I wanted to be. I didn't even have a concept. And I didn't know any other guitar players, so the whole thing seemed very remote to me. So, in a way, you could say my guitar playing is informed by the music of the Grateful Dead.

How did you make your first musical breakthrough?

I put my first real energy in music into the 5-string banjo. That was the first time I ever said, "How do you do this?" It was like cracking a combination lock. I slowed the records down and painstakingly listened to every lick and worked them out. I did a complete breakdown—as close as I was able—to learn how to play bluegrass banjo. And, having gone through that process with banjo, when I went to electric guitar I knew how to learn it. And my taste in music is kind of informed by the banjo in a way, too. I like to hear every note. I like that clarity and separation of notes. And that characterizes my guitar playing, too, in a certain way. So I came at it sort of backwards.

Did your rhythm and lead playing develop at the same rate, or did you focus more on one aspect at first?

For me, it's all playing the guitar. I really don't separate lead and rhythm, although technically speaking, they're different—what you're doing with your hands and so on. But as far as how it works in the music and what it's supposed to do, I don't really make a distinction.

But doesn't your role in the band change when you shift between them?

Yeah, it does. And sometimes I surprise myself, too. Sometimes I do something and I don't know where it comes from. In the Garcia band, when [guitarist] Melvin Seales is playing lead, sometimes I play a very strong rhythmic figure that works against what he's playing. It's a lead line, but it functions as a rhythmic thing. Early on in the Grateful Dead, when we were doing Wilson Pickett tunes and stuff like that, I'd listen to the horn parts—the way a horn stabs, stings, and slides, and the articulation of the way a horn section works together. I used to do like horn parts in the Grateful Dead, because Weir would be chompin' the rhythm and doing the little guitaristic things, like fills and R&B stuff. He's good at that. He'd be laying down the 9th chords, and I'd play little triads that worked the way horns do. I'd play like the top part of a chord. And just because of the nature of the electric guitar, three notes on it is like ten notes on other instruments. It's real thick. Just a major triad sounds amazing on an electric guitar if you really dig in and articulate it nicely so that every note is really there. You can hear every note in the harmony that you're playing. So

"We still have that ability to baffle each other, which I think is really the key."

that horn section approach to playing partial chords has a lot to do with the way I play rhythm. I almost *never* play anything denser than a triad. And you can move those little triad groupings. It's easier to harmonize a line if you're only harmonizing three notes of it. If you're trying to work on five notes, it gets a little extended. If I were a better guitar player with bigger hands, I might have taken a different approach.

After 23 years of playing with Bob Weir, do you find things have become rather predictable?

Not at all. That's the thing about Weir. As long as I've been playing with him, I still have no idea what he's going to do. Weir is a much more subtle and complicated player than I am. The thing about Bob that most people don't realize is that he's got hands that are twice the size of normal people. He can play two guitar parts with one hand. He does these things that have unbelievable stretches. You're not expecting him to have a three-octave range. There's this thing going on in the top end, and it's all one track. It's not an overdub. He sometimes doubles himself on records, but he rarely adds another part, so it's not a trick. He always just augments what he's doing. And he also has a tendency to think in long sections—longer than you'd expect. He's always at least on a 4-bar or 8-bar pattern and then another version will start. And sometimes it seems he's just playing along randomly, but it's really not. Phil is that way in spades. Phil's idea sometimes lasts the whole song. He's building all the way through the

song, and you can't even begin to notice the sense of it. Some of his things I couldn't make sense of until I played the tapes back at twice normal speed and brought the bass up to the cello or viola register. And I discovered, wow, the whole tune is just one big melody that goes all the way to the end of the tune. The tune is like four verses, and it's like, "Oh, God, how does he do that?"—because I'm coming from that banjo space where I'm going eighth-note to eighth-note. I rarely plan, because I'm much better at changing direction than I am at leading the way. I'm great at going, "Whoops, oh." I can turn on a dime. That's my forte. The illusion is that I'm leading it, but really I'm just loud.

To what extent are you the leader of Grateful Dead?

Not to any great extent, but the guys in the band all trust me. If it's a matter of when to close the door on a tune, it's easier to relate to one person. But it could be any of us. It's me because everybody trusts me. They know I serve the music. But as far as any of the rest of it goes, Weir starts his tunes, so he's the leader during his tunes. Brent is the leader during his tunes. And then we all take over during various parts. Then it's throw your hat into the ring and see who votes for you. It kind of works like that, and that's part of what keeps it amusing. And it's one of those things, too, where on a night when I'm weak and I feel like, "I don't have a thing to say tonight, you guys; I'm just bullshitting," then we can go with whoever's got the hot hand. And then some nights I feel like God, and it's, "Everybody relax. Just give me room." Luckily the Grateful Dead is organic enough to be able to adapt to all of those different personalities. That's part of keeping it sensitive, fun, and unexpected. Nobody goes, "Hey man, you fucked up your solo tonight," or, "Why didn't you do this?" or whatever. There are very few recriminations—it's over now, whatever it was.

The Dead have been notorious for never having set lists. Has that changed?

No, not yet. I do them in my band, though, because I don't like to have to be responsible for thinking about what comes next. I'd rather just go out there and play. I'd rather make the decision first, down in the dressing room. Then I can change it if I want, which I frequently do. I don't like having the pressure of being onstage and being responsible for the whole show.

How do you determine what the next song is during a Grateful Dead set? Do you take turns, or does somebody just make the decision by kicking it off?

It's whichever comes first. But mainly we do it: my turn, Bob's turn, Brent's turn. As Brent gets more and more turns, he'll be in the shuffle. That's the most fun, because there's only a limited amount of interest for me in playing and fronting the band. That's why I like to do more than one thing. And I love it when somebody else is singing, because one of my favorite things to do is backup singing. I can't back up my own singing.

You've always been known as a musician who needs to play a lot. How often would you perform if you had your choice?

If it weren't for the travel, I'd play all the time. Ideally, I'd make my week something like

An Experimental Guitarist Looks At The Grateful Dead

By Henry Kaiser

WHY DO FOLKS CRINGE AND LOOK at me suspiciously when I tell them that my favorite band has always been the Grateful Dead and that my favorite guitarist is Mr. Jerome John Garcia? Perhaps they hold to one of several popular misconceptions about the Dead. Many guitarists view them as a bunch of old hippies who play very long concerts at which they spend hours tuning up. Others view them as a band with a recent hit and accompanying MTV videos, or as a group with a very peculiar cult following of Deadheads. I consider the Dead to be one of music's most exciting and varied entities.

It's not surprising to me that saxophonist Ornette Coleman, another hero of mine, should invite Garcia to play on his most recent album. Ornette is a jazz pioneer whose spectacular innovations in the '50s and '60s rewrote the rules of jazz. He continues to do so today with his Prime Time band and other projects. Ornette's pioneering spirit of "free jazz," his openness towards taking whatever path the spirit of improvisation leads, and his democratic ideas of cooperation between players bear a close similarity to the way the Grateful Dead have worked for almost 25 years.

Onstage, all of the band members are sensitive to each other, constantly listening and reacting to each other's playing. The fact that these guys do this instead of playing by rote or going off on personal ego trips is one of the things that make the Grateful Dead more than the sum of its parts. Blues, jazz, rock, country, world music, and experimental musical forces and influences mingle to create the Dead's style. Everyone in the band plays with conviction and intensity, like they mean it. As Garcia says in the accompanying interview, "I serve the music."

RON DELANY

Garcia blows during a July, 1984, performance of "Dark Star." The band has not played it since.

The Allman Brothers, Cream, Frank Zappa, and others have featured extended improvisation onstage, but only the Dead deal with improvisation completely differently each night. "Dark Star" can be happy, sad, dark, cold, or hot—each performance a surprise to the audience and to the band. The Dead don't just improvise within a form, they improvise *with* the form. In the past they featured long and open "Dark Star" and "Other One" jams, atonal feedback, extended drum/percussion improvisations, long modal vamp jamming, and extended song form improvising within and between songs. Today most of the more free improvising usually takes place in the second-set "space" portion of the typical Dead show.

When the Dead explore these less determined, free areas of rock improvisation, they explore a much greater and more open rhythmic, harmonic, textural, and spatial area. Their early approach to improvisation was an especially versatile, open, and practical one. For the past few years or so, the band has been featuring this kind of improvisation less in their concerts.

If you are interested in checking out some of these more "outside" areas in the Dead's past recorded output, I suggest: "Dark Star" and "Feedback" (which, incidentally, is interesting to compare to recent "noise guitar" and industrial music coming out of New York City) on *Live Dead*, "The Other One" on *Grateful Dead*, and the album *Anthem Of The Sun*. Tapes of live shows abound; ask a Deadhead if he has any interesting ones. ■

An experimental guitarist extraordinaire and a member of Guitar Player*'s Advisory Board, Henry Kaiser has appeared on more than 70 albums. His most recent,* Those Who Know History Are Doomed to Repeat It *[SST (Box 1, Lawndale, CA 90260), 198], features the Grateful Dead classics "Dark Star" and "The Other One," as well as the first-ever recording of "Mason's Children," a Hunter-Garcia-Lesh-Weir song dating back to the late '60s.*

this: The big shows on the weekends with the Dead, two nights a week with the electric band, and two nights a week with my acoustic guys with me playing banjo one of those nights. And do that every week. That's ideal for me, because playing every night is really the thing I would like most to be able to do.

You seem to be a very different person in the context of the Garcia band, as opposed to the Dead. How do you see your role shift?

I just try to do what seems appropriate. All three bands have their own identity based on their own evolution. In the Garcia band, the core is John Kahn and I, and we've been playing together for an awful long time. We spent a long time finding the right combination for this band. Eventually we found Melvin, but we tried lots of guitar players and drummers. It's a matter of chemistry. You go around looking for those people that you get along with and who are musically similar to you. And when you get them, you hang onto them. It's like, "Hey, man, I'm not lettin' you out of my life. You're here for good." So when we got Melvin and [drummer] David Kemper, this band went *zzzing*. We've been in this format for at least eight years now, and we're all comfortable with each other. We can go out on the road and nobody freaks out. We have all the things that we need to have a band that's viable. I've been in some fantastically great bands where the chemistry didn't quite work. Old & In The Way was one of the greatest bands I've ever played in. No question about it. We all liked each other, but it was just volatile enough that it was tough to work—just a little edgy there. But, for me, that's part of the fun of being a musician—getting accustomed to other people. Working with people who are different than you and who have a different personality. But a lot of musicians are not that way at all. They're very inflexible and have a real hard time getting along with other people or adjusting to the situation. Or a lot of people don't play well away from home because it's a stressful situation. That's one of those things you can't know until you take a guy out on the road. You take a guy out and you wonder, "Hey, what happened to this guy? He played so great." And now I have the acoustic band with David Nelson, Sandy Rothman, Kenny Kosak, and John, and we have the beginnings of that chemistry. So, if we're lucky, in another two or three years that will become an entity.

How would you characterize the music that the acoustic band does?

It's sort of a combination of oldtime music, bluegrass, country and western, rockabilly, and gospel—it's kind of spread out. We do a lot of stuff that I've traditionally done acoustically, and we do things that nobody's ever heard me do before. Sandy plays Dobro and mandolin, I play guitar, Nelson plays guitar, Kenny plays fiddle, and John plays bass. Sandy plays some banjo, and I will eventually play some banjo, too. The thing is, I only like to play banjo when I'm not the lead singer. In a way, that's another role. Old & In The Way was the perfect banjo situation for me; I played banjo and sang baritone parts, and that was like the traditional banjo player role in a bluegrass band. I'll do two or three songs a set on banjo and be perfectly happy, but I really like to back up the singing. When we were in New York, we were still really finding our sound. By the time we played in California, we were getting pretty close. So something will come of it. Eventually we'll put out a CD of some of that stuff.

You've basically worked with just two bass players all these years. What are the strengths, similarities, and differences between Phil Lesh and John Kahn?

Playing with John is like playing with myself in a way. His sensibilities and his approach to music are almost identical to mine. Phil is all the things I'm not. John is totally harmonic, while Phil is totally dissonant, and that's why it works.

How did you and John Kahn get together?

We started playing together with Howard Wales in '69. We played with him every Monday night for two years at the old Matrix club in San Francisco. Nobody ever came. John and I played together for about a year before we even really talked to each other. We'd come and say, "Hey, what's doing man?" and that would be it. We'd plug in and play with Howard and spend all night muttering to each other, "What key are we in?" Howard was so incredible, and we were just hanging on for dear life.

"The hardest thing for me is to judge my own playing. When I'm working with somebody like Ornette Coleman, I don't have to worry about who's judging."

For some reason Howard enjoyed playing with us, but we were just keeping up. Howard was so outside. For both of us that was a wonderful experience. My ear got so I could tell the deepest chromaticism [*laughs*]. I can find it. Sometimes I can't tell *what* it is, but I know *where* it is. Playing with Howard did more for my ears than anybody I ever played with, because he was so extended and so different. His approach was all extensions and very keyboardistic. It's not guitaristic.

How was playing with Merle Saunders different?

Playing with Merle was different because he learned a lot of his harmonic approach from a guitar player. So that was real easy for me. We fit together just like that. But my style and approach to playing totally comes from whatever the music is. When I started playing with Merle, I went to a more organ-trio style. You can hear it on the Merle Saunders things that have just been rereleased on Fantasy, especially on the studio stuff [*Heavy Turbulence* and *Fire Up*]. There I played big, fat chords and did a lot of that walking-style chord shifting on the blues numbers and things that Merle is so good at. My style is much more conventional, in a way, with him, and it's very satisfying for me to play and hear myself as a conventional player. It's a kind of playing that I don't do in the Grateful Dead.

And Merle taught me structure. He filled me in on all those years of things I didn't do. I'd never played standards; I'd never played in dance bands. I never had any approach to the world of regular, straight music. He knows all the standards, and he taught me how bebop works. He taught me *music*. Between the combination of Howard and Merle, that's where I really learned music. Before it was sort of, "Okay, where do I plug in? [*laughs*]" I picked up the adult version of a music attitude from those guys.

How did your recording experience with Ornette Coleman come about?

He and his son Denardo came to a Grateful Dead show in New York, and we met there. Phil and [Dead soundman] Dan Healy had mixed one of his shows in Berkeley [California] a long time ago, so there was some connection. I guess he got invited to a Grateful Dead show, really enjoyed it, and came back to my shows on Broadway. He said he loved it, and asked me if I'd like to do something on his record.

What attracted him to your music?

His indication was that he liked the sound I get. From my point of view, when I hear his playing, I hear something that I always wish would be in mine—a kind of a joy and beauty. And it always sounds right. Even when he does something outside, it *still* sounds right. His playing has a kind of intelligence, sensitivity, and beauty that I always hope my playing has, but I'm not the one to judge that. The hardest thing in the world for me is to judge my own playing. Luckily, when I'm working for somebody like Ornette Coleman, I don't have to worry about who's judging. It's covered. He's going to make me sound good, no matter what, or I won't be there. So, it's one of those times when I feel protected in the situation. And Ornette is very giving. I don't know when I've worked for a guy who was more inspirational. I learned so much, and he was so gracious about letting me learn it. A lot of older musicians get bitter after going through years of bad scenes and being burned. But Ornette doesn't seem to have a bitter bone in his body. He's just a lovely man. Working with him was a tremendous honor.

What did you actually do with him, and how did you approach it?

I did three tunes on his album. You've got to hear them. They're Ornette Coleman tunes. His playing is just gorgeous. For me, it was a thing of finding a place where I felt I could say something rhythmically and tonally. And in the places where I had trouble, I would just say, "Hey, Ornette, I'm having trouble with this. Can you steer me through this or give me some sense of what you might like to hear?" He would never say, "Do this," or, "Do that." He would say, "Here's a possibility. Here's a couple of things you might do," and offer maybe a half-dozen possible things. Then I would play, and he'd say, "Yeah, that's neat." It was all on the positive side. It was really a nice experience.

Is it possible to put your finger on some of the specific things you learned from working with him?

I can't, because it's personal. Something would come up, and I'd say, "Well, what's goin' on here?" Because I'd hear the tonality

and think, "What the fuck is this?" So he'd break out the music, and I would look at it. It would take me a while to figure it out, because I'm not a sight-reader, but I can read. I'd go through and say, "Okay, I see how this works." Then if I started to get into real trouble, he'd get his horn. And he'd say something like, "Say you're playing in *A* minor," and he'd play some *A* minor arpeggios and then maybe some *E*♭ arpeggios. Then he'd say, "Well you can do this or that." It was more in the way of opening doors, like "Oh, yeah, far out; now I see." It's like a maze, if you think of music as being a maze. Somebody can say, "Part of this passage works like this, and this part goes like that," and all of a sudden it clicks. Like, "Oh, yeah, I can get the rest." So it was kind of along those lines. It's not something I can communicate that directly to somebody else. But just in a personal sense, it's one of those things that has the effect of freeing up my own playing by giving me ways to intellectually support something. So if go into something weird, I know why I'm going there. I have a sense of *option*. Learning things from him harmonically is like opening the door to everywhere. It's not restricted; it just opens more doors. For me, it's something that comes right at that moment in my musical life when I need that kind of input. It was real helpful for me, and I'm just now starting to feel the effects. It represents a long-term thing. This is going to go on for a while because in five or six hours, he gave me a hundred years' worth of stuff to work on. I've got stuff to mull over forever.

What do you hang onto harmonically when you're working in chromatic modes with someone like Ornette or during the Dead's "space" segment?

It depends on what I hear. If somebody's playing something that supports me that has fundamentally, say, a *D* minor seventh tonality, then I have lots of different places to go. If a guy is hanging in there rocking between two chords like *Dm7* and *Em7*—he's doing that whole-step back and forth—then I can play in *C* major or *E*♭ major or *E* major seventh. I take my cue from what I'm hearing, and then it's a question of appropriateness. I'm always leaning on the edge of, "Does this work?" If it doesn't, I change it. Part of it is just my own taste. I like the sound of some things that are dissonant and strange, and some I don't. I don't really know why, but as I develop them, they provide little pieces of furniture for me to say, "Okay, I know that I can use this broken mode where the first part is a Lydian mode going up, and the second part is a double-diminished scale that continues up a half-step higher." There are things that work sort of mechanically and sound good up to a point. But then you have to change it at some point or else it doesn't really sound good, because it's not purely double-diminished. For instance, when you get to a certain point, you have three half-steps in a row. It's that kind of stuff. If I had enough time to sit around with it and analyze it, I could probably explain to you what it is that makes me think I'm doing okay. But really I'm going on, "Does it sound like it's working?"

How important is access to the fingerboard in that equation?

Very important. You have to have enough access to the fingerboard that you're not hung up about where you are. In other words, "What key am I in? What scale interval am I at?" You need to be able to let that go past you. I'm just getting into being able to get a good sound, regardless of the structure's mathematics. So much of the guitar is patterns. But if you look at it right, patterns start to melt into each other; pretty soon you can hit anything from anywhere. The quality of consciousness that you put into the note also has a lot to do with it. You can play any note in any context, and if you play that sucker like you mean it, it's going to sound good—almost. The note that comes after it, and when it comes, and how smoothly you play it, and how much expression—individuality you can give the note—that also has a lot to do with it. Like, choosing to give a note a really rich vibrato or a real dry attack. Or having a slow opening and a long sustain. The personality of the note has as much to do with its appropriateness as the setting does. I'm finding that out more and more.

If you're two octaves above whatever instrument is playing the chords, you can play almost any note, and it will work as an extended part of the chord. If you're in the same octave, then it will work because it darkens or brightens the chord—like an interior voice. It's like playing two hands in the same octave on the piano; it really clangs. If you spread it out more, it sounds prettier, though the darkness is sometimes real interesting. The rhythm is the final part of the equation. The way you release notes, their value, and the holes that you leave have a lot to do with the strength or the power of your playing. When the band is pulsing along,

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Paul Gilbert

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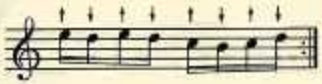
Play it in 9th position on the D and G strings. Notice that E is the only note played on the G string and that it is always an upstroke.

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punching eighth notes—where you can think of any note as the *one*—I like to do things like play a figure that's maybe seven beats long starting, say, on the end of beat four. You create this incredible tension, and the next thing you play is going to either increase the tension or you're going to find yourself back on a new *one*. It's like some kind of hypothetical jigsaw puzzle where all the pieces are white and all the same.

Do you feel that the space segment has gotten more successful over the years?

Well, it's gotten a little narrower lately, but I think it's going to expand out again pretty quick. The drummers have been adapting to a largely electronic setting over the last year, because they've replaced most of their stuff with electronics, and they're now getting used to it. Bob and I have been basically working together. Bob plays the setting, and I play over the top of it. That's pretty much the way it works. But I think we're going to start changing our space segment because we're capable of doing so much more now. And as we find ourselves more involved in the MIDI world, I think it's probably just going to get weirder and weirder—more orchestral.

Have you gone through periods when you've been in danger of falling into a structure?

Structure is not a problem with the space stuff. It doesn't even come close to having a structure. But there is a form. That is to say it's Bob and I with Phil. But in terms of actually falling into something that we could repeat, even if we wanted to, we're a long way from being anywhere near that.

As your grasp of technique becomes greater, how do you avoid the danger of technique taking over feeling? Does that ever become a problem?

Yes, it does. But in the long run it stops being a problem. The point is to keep looking. What happens with me classically is that I go through spurts of, "Wow, here's a whole bunch of stuff to learn," and start really poking away at my technique. Pretty soon I'm dominated by technique, which really is another way of saying, "Now I'm playing all habits." I'm doing these things because I practiced them so much. My fingers do them, and I'm not even there. Finally, I get bored with my playing and I make myself change somehow. But it has to come up to the wall because my musical me is delighted with being able to execute stuff that's difficult. That part of it is very satisfying. It's kind of like classical music. You're satisfied to be able to rip off that scherzo [*laughs*]. You want to be able to do that, but you want to be able to absorb the technique and let the musicality be the thing that comes forth. For me, the only way to do it is to overamp at every level. I'll just bump into that technical wall, overamp on it, and then bounce off of it. Sometimes it takes six months; sometimes more or less. And then I get bored with it and say, "Now I've got to do something really weird." I'll start busting myself. I decide I'm not going to play any figure with more than three notes next to each other. I start creating little problems. And those are just as weird because then you're avoiding stuff. The whole thing is kind of artificial in a way, but eventually everything normals out. That's why I like to keep playing. I'm involved in this series of ongoing problem solving and I haven't gotten to that place where I'm playing the way I want to yet. I've got to keep playing to get there. It's a dynamic problem.

What do you do to push yourself as a musician?

I get bored. Nothing's worse than my own boredom.

Do you still go through intense study and practice periods?

I used to put in a certain amount of hours and I still do, but it's real periodic. Like every couple of years I go through a whole bunch of new stuff, even old issues of *Guitar Player*. I think, "Now here's an interesting thing that somebody bothered to transcribe. This is something I would never think to do. Why don't I just try it?" And maybe there will be something in there I've never dreamed of, and it'll turn up later. Those things are always positive, but I'm not at all systematic about dealing with it. I tend to do it in spurts. If you assume that you haven't learned everything yet, there's no reason why your playing can't stay dynamic all your life.

What are the most important elements for getting a good tone?

It depends on what your concept of "good" tone is. First of all, it's important to have a concept of good tone—no matter what it is. And then the rest of it is just finding it. My concept of good tone is a clear, unambiguous sound on each note. For me, that means relatively high frets, relatively heavy strings, and a thick pick, so that your touch is coming from the hand and not from the pick. And that's as basic as it gets. The rest of it has to do with pickups and speakers. I go for a slightly higher

action because I like a clear note. But if you set the action too high, you're out of tune. Intonation is real important to me now—more than it used to be. I'm much more conscious now when I pull or bend a string.

How much of a difference does the pick itself make?

A big difference. A lot of it has to do with how hard you squeeze that sucker. If you pinch it harder, you'll get a duller sound out of the strings. If you hold it looser, you'll get a more open, boingier tone. It's one of those things that you never hear anything about. I use a pick that has zero flexibility—a graphite Adamas pick. I like it because I don't want anything coming out that I don't mean. I don't want the pick to spring back or do anything that I'm not controlling. Whenever you have a pick that bends, it's doing something that you're not controlling. I've almost always favored real heavy picks. Sometimes they've been ridiculous. If they're too heavy, they mute the string. They stop it. Some materials work better than others.

You appear to have a very efficient way of picking. How did you develop that?

I got into an efficiency thing playing the banjo, where efficiency is everything. You must be economical at those tempos. So for the guitar I've tended to think banjoistically—that is to say, in favor of the clearest possible sound and the smallest possible interval.

You get a very wide range of tones and colors. Do you have ways of organizing them?

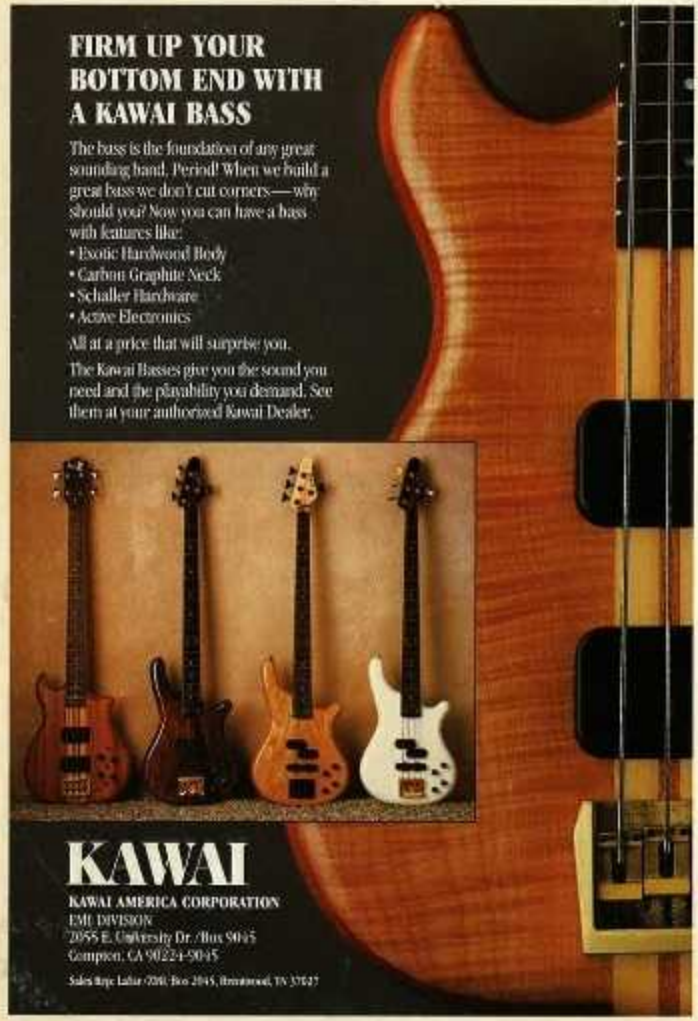
I have basically the clean sound and the fuzzed-out sound. Those are my two basic colors. The rest of it has to do with the way I have my knobs set and my effects. My guitar's treble cuts are not normal. They have capacitors in them so that when I roll the volume back, the tone stays the same. I have a unity-gain amplifier in my guitars, and that's the only reason I have it—so I can change volume without changing the tone. The capacitors also serve as resonance boosters, so when I roll the knob all the way back, I get kind of a hollow horn-like quality with plenty of cut left to play a solo. It's doesn't really filter the way a wah-wah pedal does—it's not that narrow. It's more of a resonance boost. It does cut the top some, but it also does this other thing to the midrange. So I only choose the pots and capacitor combination that produces that kind of effect, so that gives me an all-the-way-on, all-the-way-off on each pickup, which provides six basic tone voices. Then, when I put those through the fuzz, it invents a new high-end because of the way the fuzz hears low-end or midrange resonance. You no longer have the bright, screaming high end where you can pick out harmonics, although the fuzz adds a high end that brings out the fullness of the interior sound. Sometimes when I play a blues chorus or something where I use the distorted sound, I change the tone by whipping the tone knob all the way down. Most of the time the tone knob is totally useless, but in this case it really does change the tone. I also have a 5-position Stratocaster-type pickup selector so I can use the half positions, in- and out-of-phase, and with the humbucking and single-coil switch on each pickup. So right there, that's like 12 discrete possible voices that are all pretty different. And the whole thing with guitar and effects is getting something where you can hear the difference. That gives me a lot of vocabulary of basically different tones. And that's just the electronics. The rest of it is touch. I mostly work off the middle pickup in the single-coil setting and I can get almost any sound I want out of that. And touch is so individualized. It's something every guitar player has to find for himself.

Do you modify your effects setup frequently?

Not very frequently, but every two years or so Steve Parish and I go out to the music stores to see if there's anything new in the world of guitar stuff. There never is. It's all modifications of the same. I'm still waiting for someone to come with up a MIDI guitar system that I like, which will happen sometime in the next few years. It's one of those things I try periodically and say, "Well, not yet." I've got some stuff in my setup that I've had a very long time. But I do go out to try stuff, and if there's anything even remotely interesting, I buy it and stick it in my effects rack and see what happens.

How much do your speakers matter?

They're like your strings. You have to change them pretty regularly, or you start to get a real "wet" sound. They're also the most weather-sensitive of anything. If you're playing in a humid climate, all of a sudden that cardboard turns to papier-mâché. Then you have something real soggy-sounding coming out. Speakers notice all those changes in pressure that are a function of altitude and changes in humidity—they're the most sensitive. That's what is finally producing the sound



that everybody hears when you're playing an electric guitar. So they're like your strings. You have to be real careful with them. You have to listen to them carefully to notice whether they're dying out on you. And I can fry a speaker in no time flat. I can kill 'em. I have a lot of speakers onstage, and I try not to run them too loud because I hate blowing them.

You've been playing Doug Irwin guitars for nearly 15 years. What makes them special?

There's something in the way they feel with my touch—they're married to each other. The reason I went with his guitars in the first place was they just fell into my hand perfectly. I can't even explain why. It wasn't just a matter of action; it just felt right. I'm not analytical about guitars, but I know what I like. And when I picked up that guitar, I'd never felt anything before, or since, that my hand likes better.

How would you describe it?

It's more like a Strat than anything else. The simplest way to think about it is as a Strat with a Les Paul neck. But really the neck is not a Paul, because it doesn't have an arched fingerboard. It's flat, like a banjo neck. I've had that guitar all this time, and I've set the bridge once and never had the neck straightened. That sucker is still as flat as an aircraft carrier. Not only that, but the frets haven't worn down, and I've been playing it all this time.

What's your number-one backup guitar?

I have a Modulus Graphite Blackknife, but I've never used it as a backup, except for a couple of minutes. It's what I take on the road. It's wired like my Irwin, so I can plug into my regular gear. Doug is going to make me a simple version of what I've got for a backup. I've also started experimenting with other guitars. I've got a couple of Steinbergers now. I just got a new one with a whammy bar, and I may get one with a body. I may actually be able to play that onstage. I like the Steinberger—that's what I used with Ornette. It's very portable and it's really in tune, and that makes it fun to play. It's a little tough getting the sound, because it's over-bright, but if you fool around with it you can get a sound out of it.

Do you play both acoustic and electric at home?

Yes. To me, they're separate instruments. There's a certain amount of crossover, because when I play the acoustic I don't use a capo, for example. And I play in any key off the fingerboard. To me, it's what comes out. It doesn't matter how I get there. If it comes out and sounds right, then that's what I want. If I spend enough time working on the acoustic guitar, then my touch gets good enough that I can get it out the way I want it to sound. My sense of how I want it to sound is something that has evolved only very recently. It's just not the same instrument as an electric, and once you admit it, you save yourself a world of hurt.

If you were going to teach someone to play guitar, what approach would you take?

I'd have to start with what they liked. That's the way I used to teach. I'd find out what kind

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Solo albums: *Garcia*, Grateful Dead Merchandising (Box 12979, San Rafael, CA 94913), GD-4003 (CD only); *Cats Under The Stars*, Arista, 1053. **With the Grateful Dead:** (on Warner Bros.) *Grateful Dead*, 1689; *Anthem Of The Sun*, 1749; *Aoxomoxoa*, 1790; *Live/Dead*, 1830; *Workingman's Dead*, 1869; *American Beauty*, 1893; *Grateful Dead Live*, 1935; *Europe '72*, 3X2662; (on Grateful Dead Merchandising compact disc) *Wake Of The Flood*, GD-4001; *Blues For Allah*, GD-4002; (on Arista) *Terrapin Station*, ALB6-8329; *Shakedown Street*, ALB6-8321; *Go To Heaven*, ALB6-8322; *Reckoning*, 8604; *Dead Set*, AL9-8152; *In The Dark*, AL9-8452. **With Merle Saunders** (on Fantasy): *Keystone Encores, Vol. 1*, MPF 4533; *Keystone Encores, Vol. 2*, MPF 4534; *Fire Up*, 9421. **With Paul Kantner & Grace Slick:** *Sunfighter*, Grunt, FTR 1002; *Baron Von Tollbooth*, Grunt, BFLI 0148. **With New Riders Of The Purple Sage:** *New Riders Of The Purple Sage*, CBS, 30888; *Powerglide*, CBS, 31284. **With others:** Howard Wales, *Hooteroll?*, Rykodisc, RCD 10052; David Bromberg, *Demon In Disguise*, CBS, 31753; David Crosby, *If I Could Only Remember My Name*, Atlantic, 7203; Tom Fogerty, *Excalibur*, Fantasy, 9413; Art Garfunkel, *Angel Clare*, CBS, 31474; Mickey Hart, *Rolling Thunder*, Warner Bros., 2635; Jefferson Airplane, *Volunteers*, RCA, LSP-4238; Graham Nash, *Songs For Beginners*, Atlantic, SD 7204; Old & In The Way, *Old & In The Way*, Rykodisc, RCD 10009 (CD only); Bob Weir, *Ace*, Grateful Dead Merchandising, GD-4004 (CD only); Ornette Coleman, *Virgin Beauty*, Epic, FR 44238.

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of music they wanted to play. That has to be there. If there is nothing that they want to play, then they don't want to learn how to play the guitar. It's that simple. I would make every effort to get as close to what they wanted as quickly as possible in order to scratch that itch, because you want to accomplish something. If you're just doing the guitar, it doesn't make any sense. But if you can accomplish something like, "I heard this in my head, and now I can do it with my hands," then you've made that leap of faith that it's possible to play the guitar. Once somebody gets that going, they can learn.

How do you relate to your kids musically?

My youngest daughter, Trixie, is a real big Bob Marley & The Wailers fan, and that's fine with me. Annabelle is a little more eclectic. She likes all kinds of different stuff. Neither one of them seems very interested in music as a career or something they'd like to get involved with. They're just music fans. I relate to them by letting them listen to anything they like. I don't force anything on them.

Who are some musicians that the Dead has jammed with who seem to be able to relate to what the band does?

Ah, the Neville Brothers. They know how to do it, no problem. But then there are lots of other people, too. It's just a matter of whether you get to spend a little time with them. The Tower Of Power horns are great to work with any time. I love working with those guys. They're hot. You can put Carlos Santana in *any* group of musicians, I don't care where it is in the world, and he'll be playing. He's all ears. He has great respect for all other musicians, and he's just a wonderful guy. Playing with him always enhances the situation.

It seems that when you play "Stella Blue" [Wake Of The Flood] and "Ship Of Fools" [Mars Hotel] with the Dead, your attitude and stage manner changes. You appear to step out and really take charge, which you don't usually do.

I love both those tunes. I feel they are two of my most successful songs insofar as every once in a while when you write, something special reaches in. For me "Ship Of Fools" and "Stella Blue" are both very special songs. "Ship Of Fools" is great because it's just a good, strong, solidly constructed song. "Stella Blue" is a mood piece. It's lovely, and it's also unique—it's not like any other song. It doesn't owe anything to anything else. When [Dead lyricist Robert] Hunter gave me the lyrics, I sat on 'em and sat on 'em. Then when we were in Germany, I sat down with an acoustic guitar early in the morning, and the song just fell together. It was so effortless writing it that I don't feel as though I wrote it. It's also one of those songs that I was born to sing. Every time I do it, I find something new in it, like a little thing in the phrasing or some little thing in the sense of it. And the way the Grateful Dead plays "Stella Blue" is just gorgeous. Everybody plays so beautifully on it. At times it seems like a moment freezes on one of those chord changes, and I have to go a long way to find where I am and where the lyric is. Some moments are so beautiful. That song brings out a certain sensitivity and delicacy that only the Grateful Dead is capable of. Those guys will follow my lyric. If I change the tempo inside of a phrase, they'll be there. If I retard it slightly or pull it back, they'll be right there in the next bar. It's amazing. It's a special thing.

Are there any songs that you would really prefer not to play anymore?

Nah, I don't really feel that way, although some songs come up and I go, "Oh, if we've got to do this song again, I'm gonna . . ." you know? For instance, I'd be perfectly delighted if we never did "Big River" again or some of those tunes Bob does, because there are so many simple country and western songs that you could replace them with that would be as much fun to do. But, on the other hand, when you actually get down and play the tune—even if you've played it a million times—there's always *something* in there. I find myself liking some songs in spite of myself.

All things considered, you and Weir might be the most recorded guitarists in history. Just about every note you've played in public is on somebody's tape. Do you ever listen to old tapes and, if so, do they surprise you?

You may be right. It's amazing some of the things I've run into. It goes all the way back to the beginning. Somebody will play me a live show, and I'll go, "Who the hell is this?" And it will be something really far out. And I'll go "Wow, I don't even remember when we were doing that." And that does happen to me pretty frequently. A lot of what surprises me is the surprisingly clear intention of the Grateful Dead's approach to music. It's there from the very earliest stuff. Something about that thing of, "Here's the way it works; it works like *this*." Even though none of us might agree, the result is that it does work. I didn't hear it back when we were doing it. I always thought "This is chaos. Nobody's playing the way I want them to play." You get into that thing that you're the only guy who knows how it should be done, and "Why doesn't everybody do what I want 'em to do?" And it takes a long time to shake that attitude. But going back and listening to it, it blows me away how solid and definite everything was. That's one of the things that makes the Grateful Dead fun. It's that element of surprise. You listen to it and go, "Goddamn, those guys sound like they know what they're doing."

"I'm better at changing direction than leading the way. I can turn on a dime. That's my forte. The illusion is that I'm leading it, but really I'm just loud."

It must be great to still be in love after nearly 25 years.

There's nothing like it. We've just been incredibly lucky, because personally and professionally we enjoy each other's company. But more than that, we still have that ability to baffle each other, which I think is really the key. I don't know where you come up with other people who are like this. It's just a rare thing.

"Hell In A Bucket"

JERRY GARCIA'S SECOND SOLO IN "Hell In A Bucket" provides a short, but insightful, look at his lead style. It is interesting to note that he has not structured the solo in the typical fashion of starting in the low register and ending on a high, screaming note. In fact, he has taken a directly opposite approach. He begins on the highest pitch of the entire solo (*A*) and ends on the lowest (the *B* found an octave and a minor seventh below it). He kicks the solo off in the fourteenth position (bars 1 through 6), wanders down to the eleventh position for bars 7 through 9, and in bar 10 returns to fourteenth position, which he remains in until bar 17.

DON DOEHNE

Garcia has been using this custom Doug Irwin electric for nearly 11 years.

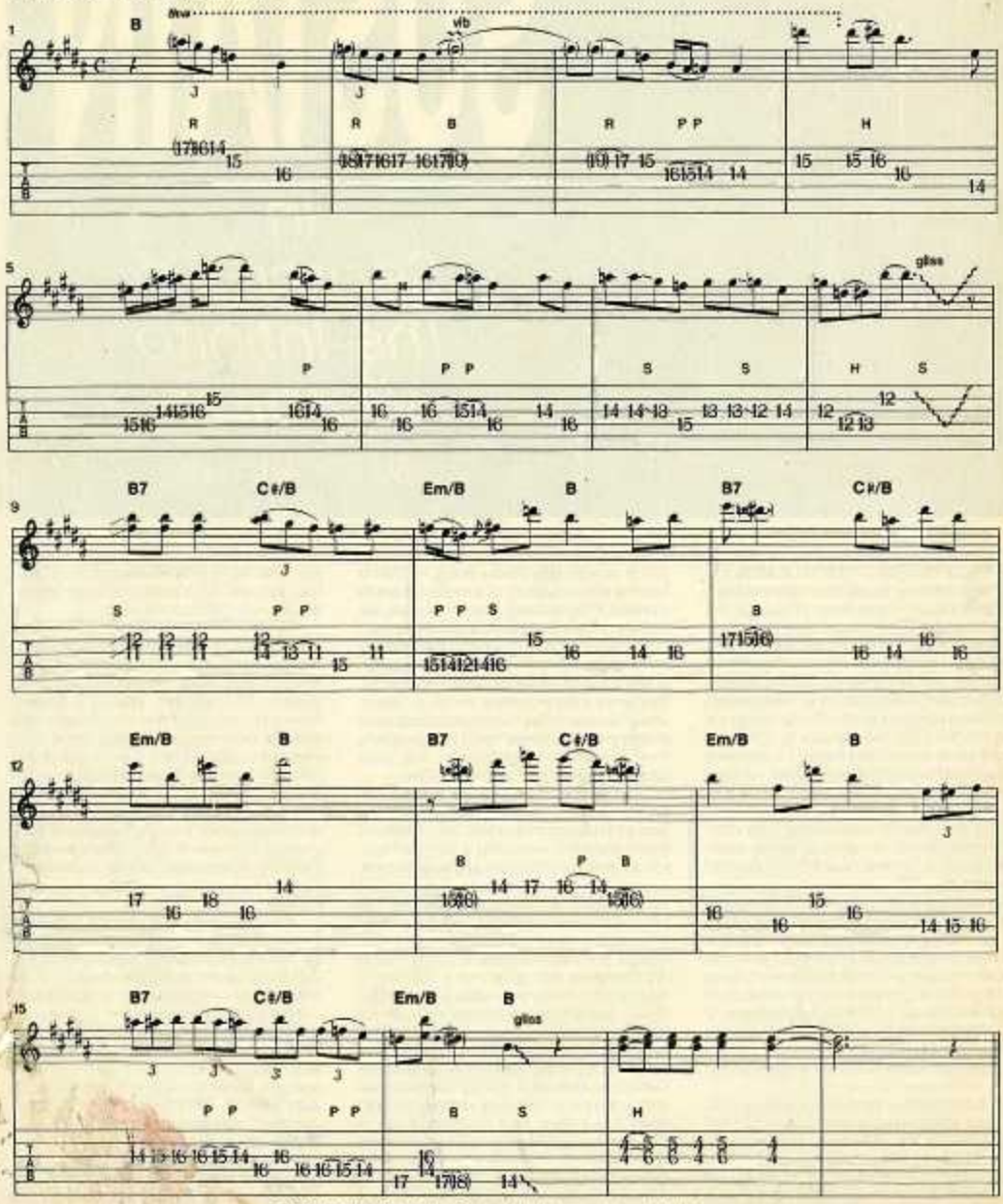
For the first eight bars, Jerry plays over a *B* major chord, giving him a chance to mingle his bluesy ideas with some chromatic lines. He frequently plays a blue note (♭3, ♭5, or ♭7) and then within a few beats plays the unaltered note. In bar 2, he begins on *F* (the lowered 5th) and ends the bar on *F*♯, the natural 5th of the *B* chord. In bar 4, he starts on *D* (the lowered 3rd) and then hammers to the natural third (*D*♯) on the second half of the next beat. Occasionally, he employs the natural 7th to pass down chromatically from the root to the lowered 7th (see bars 3, 6, and 15). Chromatic motion in the opposite direction (♭7 up to the root) occurs in bars 5 and 15. Beginning at measure 9, two chords per bar are featured; Garcia skillfully mixes the chord tones of the changes with blue notes.

Bent notes are used sparingly and atypically. While most rock players bend up a whole-step or more, Jerry favors the half-step bend. Of the eight bent notes in the solo, only one is bent a whole-step—the *E* to *F*♯ in bar 2. In bar 3, he releases this bend back down a whole-step.

Jerry's style involves a seamless integra-

tion of picked, hammered-on, and pulled-off notes, as well as a fair amount of sliding up to and down from notes. These nuances imbue his playing with a bouncy, quasi-jazz feeling at times. Although this is a short improvisation, the serious Garcia fan will nevertheless find many of the elements that contribute to a classic Jerry Garcia solo. —*Mark Small*

Music by Robert Weir
Transcribed by Mark L. Small

See Notational Symbols, page 110

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