

PLAYING THE MARKET

CONFESSIONS OF A VINTAGE GEAR WHORE

BY CURLY MAPLE

ON GOLDEN BLONDE

WITH PRICES OF old guitars rising faster than the population of China, it's not easy being a vintage 'no. One of the most collectible electrics, a 1959 Les Paul Standard, can now fetch \$200,000. That's, like, a house in most towns.

Not having enough scratch for a 'Burst, but wanting a piece of that '59 Gibson magic, I set out to find an alternate. After a little

Googling, I found a

comely ES-330

TDN for sale at a

local music store.

(TDN is shorthand

for thinline/double-pickup/natural

finish.) Similar to

an ES-335, the ES-

330 has a Mickey

Mouse-eared, laminated maple

body, a mahogany neck and a bound

rosewood fret-

board. But among

several crucial differences, the ES-

330 is fully hollow

and equipped with

P-90 (single-coil)

pickups, while the ES-335's body is semisolid and fitted with humbuckers.

When I arrived at the store, the salesman warned me: "Dude, a lot of people have been sweatin' that guitar." Immediately I could see why. With its nicely yellowed, barely checked blonde finish, the guitar looked even hotter in real life than it did on the web. It sounded unbelievably resonant when unplugged, and its O-shaped neck and lightweight body were exceedingly comfortable. Electrified, the instrument had that sweet Grant Green tone, which—although I couldn't jazz my way out of a paper bag—I was really down with. I had to have it.

Due to its rare natural finish—only 79 ES-330 TDNs were made in 1959—the guitar was tagged at \$5,900. But compared to the price of a '59 Les Paul or the \$40,000-plus cost of a '59 ES-335 TDN, I'd call that a bargain.

COOL EBAY ITEM OF THE MONTH

Item number 3727523245

A nasty, 1987 Gibson US-1 guitar, played by Stevie Young, who filled in for his drunken uncle Malcolm on AC/DC's 1988 tour. After 10 days and 16 bids, this ax sold for almost \$1,200.



DIGITAL SCOREBOARD

FreeHand MusicPad Pro

By Emile Menasché

FROM DIGITAL AMPLIFIERS to modeling guitars, computer technology has changed nearly everything about how we make music. Finally, the microchip has come to bear on the world of sheet music. The FreeHand MusicPad Pro does away with traditional paper, allowing musicians to view music "e-book" style, make notations and exchange files.

The Basics

The MusicPad Pro looks like a dismembered laptop monitor. It's about the size of a typical fake book and weighs less than five pounds, yet it offers a bright backlit 12.1-inch TFT (thin-film-transistor) screen that displays a page worth of music at full-size. And with 32MB of Flash memory (64MB in the MusicPad Pro Plus), it can hold thousands of pages. Plus, pages can be turned via an optional footswitch.

The MusicPad Pro is a bit like a PDA for musicians in that it can link to a computer or fly solo. The included software lets you connect it to a PC or OS X-compatible Apple computer via USB or Ethernet, convert graphical notation files into a format the Pro can read and transfer files between devices. Music files can be downloaded or purchased through FreeHand, and it's possible

to use scans of your own sheet music, or the output from programs like Sibelius.

Operation

Despite its high-tech roots, the MusicPad Pro is easy to operate. Its interface will be instantly familiar to personal computer users, and its touchscreen controls allow you to open menus, initiate commands, navigate the music and take notes using your fingers or the included stylus.

The MusicPad's annotation features are impressive.

Directions can be written on the music in different colors, and musical notation can be entered as well. Notations can be hidden or displayed with the push of a button.

But as impressive as the annotation functions are, they're trumped by the Pro's navigation abilities. You can enter rehearsal marks and instantly move among them, and use "Hotspots" to jump easily to another part of the score. The MusicPad Pro also allows you to "look ahead" in the score and to group scores in a playlist for quick access onstage. Finally, the score can be viewed in letter or landscape mode.

The Bottom Line

Flexible, easy to read and powerful, the FreeHand MusicPad Pro is a powerful piece of gear for teachers, session musicians, composers or performer with a large repertoire. ■

PRO: Holds tons of music, nice user interface

CON: Expensive, footswitch optional



KA-CHING!

LIST PRICE: MusicPad Pro, \$999.00; MusicPad Pro Plus, \$1,199.00
MANUFACTURER: FreeHand Systems, Inc., 95 First St., Suite 200, Los Altos, CA 94022; (650) 941-0742; musicpadpro.com

buzzbin

NEW, HIP AND UNDER THE RADAR

IF YOUR BAND could nail Ozzy's voice, Geezer's bass technique and Bill Ward's laidback feel, you'd be in Black Sabbath heaven (and hell). While you'll never find those incredibly nuanced flavors in a stompbox, you may get close to the basic recipe for Tony Iommi's tone with the PD-1 Paranoid distortion pedal.

Housed within 14-gauge stainless steel and powered via nine-volt battery or AC adapter, the Paranoid boasts three solid-feeling control knobs and an off/on footswitch that allows for mechanical true-bypass. The key control

KA-CHING!

LIST PRICE: \$250.00
MANUFACTURER: Godlyke, Inc.; (973) 835-2100; godlyke.com

IRON MAN Musician Sound Design PD-1 Paranoid distortion

knob is Overkill, which dials in the desired amount of distortion. With the control set at approximately nine o'clock, I had a sound that virtually matched Iommi's basic tone on early cuts like "Wicked World," "N.I.B." and "Paranoid." The plentiful mids, high transients and compressed lows were all there. At higher Overkill levels, the sound gets thicker and more saturated. While feedback blooms easily and leads become punchy and gritty, Iommi's sound lies in those lower regions. The volume knob sets

the output, obviously, and the tone control is essentially a high boost/cut. The manufacturer says the knob's center detent is the default setting for that "secret Sabbath sound," and while this is true, I found

slightly darker settings were better for the rhythm riffs of "Children of the Grave" and the seventh-chord midsection of "War Pigs."

All in all, the Paranoid is essential for stoner rockers or anyone hoping to get the heavy but midrange Laney-style clipping that defined Sabbath's early records. Iron Man lives again. — James Rotondi

