

ROG

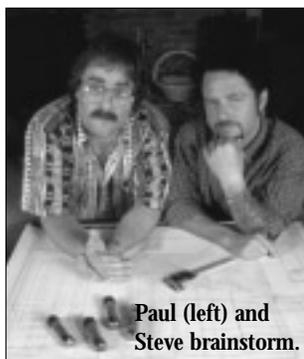


RIVERA OWNERS GROUP

STEVE LUKATHER

One of the world's best-known players joins forces with Rivera for a revolution

In an age when most bands typically have a two-year lifespan, Toto is practically an institution, having lasted for 20 years. And at the heart of Toto is Steve Lukather, one of the most-recorded, most-heard guitarists in history. Ever since he first laid down tracks at the tender age of 18, he's been *everywhere*. That's not just on Toto hits and platinum albums, either. The guy's practically a *platinum machine*, adding his trademark licks to hit material by everyone from Michael Jackson to Joe Cocker, to Graham Nash to Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Don Henley, Elton John, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison.



Paul (left) and Steve brainstorm.

We talked to Steve just as he was about to leave with Toto to tour Europe in support of their latest album, *Tambu* (on Sony). "We're doing the festival tour of Europe," Steve says. "We're headlining, except with Tina Turner in England, where there will be about 100,000 people a night. James Brown is opening for us in Copenhagen. I think, first off, we should open for James Brown, and second, I can't wait to hear him live! I'll be losing my mind, because I love that stuff." The Toto tour lineup consists of Steve Lukather, David Paich on keyboards, Mike Porcaro on bass, and Simon Phillips on drums, plus two background singers, John James and Jenny Douglas.

Steve's other band, Los Lobotomys, is currently on hiatus while he tours with Toto. However, as soon as the European Toto tour is finished, the band will tour the U.S. Afterwards, Luke will record a solo album and then a new Los Lobotomys disc before touring with the Lobotomys next year. (The Los Lobotomys album, *The Candyman*, is on the Sony label worldwide, under Steve's name as a solo artist. In the U.S., it's on the Viceroy label, billed as Los Lobotomys.)

Throughout his stellar career, Steve has always called on Paul Rivera to tweak his amps. Now he and Paul have collaborated on a Steve Lukather Signature Model amp, which will be available before year's end. Why is now the right time? "I've known Paul for about 22 years," Steve says.



PHOTOS BY JIM COONTZ

"We've been talking about doing something together for a long time, and now I have the time. We sat down and threw around some ideas. Everybody in the world today is making amplifiers, it seems, so unless you do something different, there's no point in putting out another one. We came up with a couple of new concepts."

Paul Rivera elaborates, "We're working on a brand new head with three channels, each with a different sound. Luke calls them loud, louder, and loudest. And it's pretty neat. It has a unique effects loop that lets you select parallel or series, with an effects blend control besides the effects level controls for the send and return. If you have a digital effect, it might suck on your tone, so with this, you don't have to rely on the



WORKING WITH ARTISTS IS THE KEY TO RIVERA INNOVATION

Perhaps the most important component in any Rivera amp is artists' input, and Paul Rivera is the first to tell you that. But he'll also tell you that it isn't as simple as Jay Graydon saying that the capacitor labeled C12 should be changed from 10 microfarads to 100 microfarads, or Steve Lukather suggesting a different resistor in the power section. Oh, if only it were that simple. But besides a mastery of amplifier design, Paul has—through years of working with artists—developed the ability to interpret artists' wishes into circuitry that sounds great.

Even after almost three decades' worth of working with real, live guitarists, Paul still feels that working with artists is the best way to develop amps. You often read artist interviews in ROG and elsewhere containing the player's comments about how Paul modified this or tweaked that. Of course, this is to make the player sound as good as he or she can possibly sound. But it's also the way that Paul develops concepts for the next generation of amps, just as he used artists' feedback to determine features in every amp he's ever made, from the TBR Series to the R Series combos, the KnuckleHeads, and now the Artist Series.

So, here's the short-form story of Paul's work with artists and how it's impacted the amps you know today in the Rivera line.

When did you first start tinkering inside players' amps?

My first start with artists was in junior high school, working on equipment for my friends. Funny enough, it's not that different than when you do it for professionals: They have a problem and you try to solve it. They describe what they want or need, and you try to find a solution. The first exposure I had to *professional* musicians was when I had my own shop in back of Eddie Bell Guitars in 1968 on 49th Street, in New York City.

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DAVID WILLIAMS

The Bigtime Doesn't Get Any Bigger

COURTESY DAVID WILLIAMS



When you play guitar for the most famous singers on the planet, Madonna and Michael Jackson, it's understandable that your name may not be as well-known as your bosses'. However, make no mistake that David Williams has been a major contributor to their music for several years. He played on MJ's *Off The Wall*, *Thriller*, *Triumph, Victory, Bad*, and *Dangerous*, and coordinated the musicians for Madonna's huge 1990 *Blonde Ambition* tour (he's been with Madonna for a decade). In addition, he's been instrumental in the music of Earth, Wind & Fire, the Jacksons, George Howard, Chaka Khan, The Four Tops, Rod Stewart, and Boz Scaggs (this is just a small portion of the list). Is this guy busy? You bet. We were lucky to catch up with David the week he was rehearsing with Michael Jackson's band as they were about to jet to Brunei, to entertain the richest man in the world—the Sultan of Brunei—for his 50th birthday. After that, rehearsals were to begin before the big tour started—Budapest, Bucharest, Prague, Moscow, Warsaw, and other European venues plus Cairo, Egypt, in September, followed by autumn gigs in South Korea, Southeast Asia, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. Talk about frequent-flier miles!

You've been with Michael Jackson since 1979, so he obviously likes your playing and your sound. What Rivera gear are you taking with you for the tour?

I'm taking the TBR-2SL head—two, actually, since one is a spare. This is the perfect amp for me, because I play a lot of rhythm, like on "Billie Jean" and stuff like that. It's perfect. I love that amp.

Do you use a Strat with that, to get that distinctive sound?

No. I've never used a Strat in my life. I bought this Ibanez in 1982, a sunburst Strat copy. In 1984, I had different electronics put in. It's got Seymour Duncan stacks with interchangeable switches. I can

get a 335 and a Les Paul sound from it.

You must need a wide range of sounds.

Yeah, exactly.

Are you using any kind of effects?

Yeah. I've been using a t.c. electronic TC2290 and a Yamaha SPX900 and SPX90, a BBE Sonic Maximizer, and a Rocktron Hush II. It all sits in a rack. I use the 2290's footswitch to control it all. It's all MIDI'd and everything. This setup has never failed me in eight years. Not one problem.

How long have you been using Rivera gear?

Since just before the *Dangerous* tour, about five years now. I tried quite a few amps, but Paul seemed to customize his stuff to suit the player, more so than others. No one else's equipment fit me. But Paul made sure it was just what I wanted.

I said, "Paul, you know I have these new guitars from Ibanez, and the electronics are new and brighter. I need the amp to sound a little fatter and darker." He said, "No problem." I sent my amp to him, and he returned it the next day. It was like a whole different amp. He's amazing. I told him what I wanted, and he gave me exactly what I wanted. A lot of manufacturers don't want to change their amp to suit the artist.

What are you using for speaker cabinets?

I have two Rivera 4x12s, in stereo. They have Vintage Celestions. I can hear myself very well. I use a wireless, and I actually had to sit out by the monitor board recently. We had been in that rehearsal room for 11 days straight and it was blasting. I had to get away from my amp and the rest of the band.

With all the touring you do, is there any time left for recording?

I've been doing a lot of recording. I just did music for a movie with Daymon Wayons called *Bulletproof*. Now we're starting on another one with Whoopii Goldberg called *The Associates*, which is coming out in the fall. And I'm writing music for these movies, too.

STEVE LUKATHER

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effect treating your sound right; it doesn't have to go 100% through the effect. You can set the digital effect on 'wet only,' and then blend in the amount. Each channel has its own boost. There's also an effects loop bypass. So there is a total of seven footswitchable switching functions. And since each channel has two sounds, you basically have six sounds plus your effects loops."

It's a 100-watt top, but Rivera explains that it has two unique switches on it—one selects Vintage or Modern mode, which reconfigures the output tubes and makes it either 100 watts or 50 watts, and the other switch reduces the power even further. "So you can have 100, 50, 25, or 8 watts," Paul explains. "In that low-power mode and set to Vintage, the tubes are operating at much less voltage, so they have an enormously long life, as will your ears and your neighbors'. It makes it great when you're in the studio or in the living room practicing."

The new amp's design doesn't end at the head. A unique speaker cabinet design (currently awaiting its patent, so we can't give you all the details yet) makes the amp behave like no other, with incredible range and versatility. Both Paul and Steve grin wryly when the say, "It's like nothing you've ever heard before."

Until his new Rivera Steve Lukather Signature Model is ready, Steve will continue to use KnuckleHeads. "I'm using the KnuckleHeads as power amps, believe it or not," he says. "They work great. I use a Bradshaw preamp that's been part of my rig for a while. I've also used the KnuckleHead by itself live on some stuff I did with Steve Morse and Albert Lee. At 1995's Nashville NAMM show the three of us were playing together, through our affiliation with Music Man guitars. It's great."

Paul Rivera adds, "Steve's got six K412 cabinets. Three he keeps in Europe, and three he keeps in Asia and South America. They're stuffed with Celestion Vintage 30 16-ohm speakers. His KnuckleHeads have been modified to use 6550 output tubes, which I found very interesting. It has more headroom for his rhythm playing and sounds more 'midrange scooped.' He likes scooped mids. The EL34s are definitely a richer midrange. He likes it for one of his heads; Steve likes a variety of tone."

Another recent equipment development in Steve's life is the Music Man Luke guitar: "It has a humbucking in the back and two EMG single-coils up front, and a Floyd Rose. It's beautiful-sounding, with ash wood. It's versatile, feels incredible, sounds incredible. I use standard Ernie Ball Slinkys, with a .009 on top. When I tune down, I use .010s. I haven't come up with any custom gauges, but sometimes I use heavier gauges on the bottom for a specific sound. On the road, I keep it pretty simple."

Steve says that he isn't using his famous Bradshaw rack very much these days: "I went to racks anonymous, man. Bob does my switching system. It's basically a couple of Lexicon PCM70s and a compressor and a UniVibe modified by Bob Bradshaw so it wouldn't be so noisy."

LES DUDEK

AND RIVERA'S UNIQUE TONE

Les Dudek has been practically a household name since playing with Boz Scaggs in the 1970s. A bluesy, full-out player, he's tracked or toured with the Steve Miller Band, Stevie Nicks, Cher, Dave Mason, the Allman Brothers Band, and a host of others. He's also recorded five solo albums, including the burnin' *Deeper Shades Of Blues* (GeoSynchronous Records, P.O. Box 540962, Merritt Island, FL 32954-0962). A hot, driving album, it features Les and various Rivera amps all over it.

In the past several of years, you've probably seen Les onstage with Stevie Nicks, Marshall Tucker, and the Atlanta Rhythm Section. He's also performed clinics for Rivera and performed throughout Europe with Rivera gear. Currently, he's forming a new band and plans U.S. and Japan tours in support of *Deeper Shades*. We caught Les between auditions for prospective bass players.

How'd you like the Hundred Duo Twelves?

They were really good; I get a special kind of tone out of them, and I love all the features Paul puts into them. I run two of them in stereo and set them really clean and loud, and use my own effects pedals. It freaks people out. Every place I've played, people have come up and asked how I get that sound. I tell them—Rivera amplifiers.

Have you used Rivera head/cabinet setups?

In fact, when I went out on tour with Stevie Nicks, I used a wall of Rivera amps. I had two of the big TBR-1s in a rack and two stacks of Rivera 4x12 cabinets. Those amps were swingin'.

What are you doing between tours and albums?

I just finished a batch of library music for TV and movies up in Nashville. I was working with the keyboard player who was with Foreigner, Whitesnake, and Poco. We've been writing songs together, too.



COURTESY LES DUDEK

Kenny Lee Lewis

HOT PICKS! WITH THE STEVE MILLER BAND

You won't see Kenny Lee Lewis using a Rivera amp onstage with the Steve Miller Band. It's not that he doesn't use one—boy, does he!—but if you take a look at the stage, there aren't any amps to be seen. They're all offstage in boxes with microphones that feed the P.A. system. Each of the musicians has custom-fit in-ear monitors, and everyone has his own mix that's almost like hearing a studio recording. The result is total control in concert without, as Kenny can attest, blowing your head off at full-out levels. And there are no monitor cabinets or mic stands to trip over, either, since everyone's wireless and has a head-worn microphone for vocals.

But we digress. Who is this Kenny Lee Lewis, and how did he get to be onstage with Steve Miller? It seems that back around 1982, Kenny hooked up with Steve. Kenny and Gary Mallaber, who had played on all of Steve's hits, were recording tracks for an album, when Steve called Mallaber to tell him that he needed to deliver an album to Capitol in a couple of months. After hearing Kenny and Gary's tracks, Steve asked to use the material and add his vocals and guitar, plus he enlisted Kenny to tour with him. And he's been playing with Miller ever since.

But Kenny's done a lot more than play guitar on Steve's tours. He penned "Cool Magic," on the flip side of the European release of Miller's "Abracadabra," plus he's appeared onstage and album with B.B. King, Eddie Money, Tower of Power, Quincy Jones, and dozens of other high-profile artists. He has a scad of songwriting credits, plus his movie soundtrack credits include *Protocol*, *Spring Break*, *Iron Eagle*, and *Night Of The Comet*. In recent years, Kenny has expanded into writing the underscoring for motion pictures and television, and produced two New Age instrumental solo acoustic albums *Tranquil Guitar* and *Twilight Blues* (available on Metacom Nature's Harmony series).

We talked with the versatile Mr. Lewis between the spring and summer Steve Miller Band tours, and got the lowdown on him and his gear.

What's your main amp for the Steve Miller tour?

I'm using Steve Miller-commissioned KnuckleHead rackmount amps. They're basically KnuckleHeads in a rack-mount configuration, with a few extra bells and whistles. There's Pentode/Triode switching and Hi/Lo Power. We keep them at Pentode, Hi Power all the time. We have both 100 and 55 watters—Steve uses the 100s and I use the 55s.



PHOTO BY KIM MILLER

What about speaker cabinets?

Steve's using the 2x12 slant Rivera K212, which has a lot of balls. He had a special case designed to put that into. I'm using a 1x12 open-back cabinet with a Celestion G85, the same one as in the R series. I have that miked with an AKG D12 mike in a box that's just big enough to have some air movement and a little bit of wood reflection; there's also some foam in it. It's still kind of choked, so a lot of times we take the lid off partway to leave a crack so the air can get in.

What guitars are you taking out with you?

My main guitar with Steve is a Don Grosh handmade custom hybrid guitar that has both electric pickups and an acoustic rosewood bridge with its own set of electronics and own separate output. So when I play it, I've got the magnetic pickups going through the KnuckleHead and the bridge is going through the P.A. board as an acoustic guitar. When you hit a chord, and they spread it out in the mix with effects and everything, it sounds just huge.

That would be killer for rhythm.

I primarily play rhythm with Steve, although I also play lead on a few songs. It works great for leads, too, because then you have some of that incredible piezo chirpy top-end, studio-quality high end that you can blend in. So that way, when you're

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NICOLE HUGHES

THE SWEET AND THE THRASHY

When we first heard from Nicole Hughes, it was two days before the official release of her band's first album, on March 26, 1996. You'd think she'd have plenty to do without writing a letter to tell us how much she liked her Rivera M100 head and matching 4x12 cabinet. But she was pretty excited, and after six months with her amp, she was more pumped than ever about it—and wanted to let us know.

Who is this guitarist who was so enthusiastic about her Rivera? We had to find out, so we got hold of *Flamethrower*, the debut album by her band, Scratching Post (it's available on Squirtgun Records, P.O. Box 51053, 25 Peel Centre Dr., Unit 111, Bramalea, Ontario, Canada L6T 5M2; email: squirtgn@enterprise.ca). To say this four-year-old Ontario-based band offers something new is an understatement: The sound is raw, rough-edged, thrashy, and full of heavy guitar grindage in a speed-metal vein, complete with relentless eighth-note underpinnings. But Nicole's lead vocals are sweet, soft, and at times even *soothing*. This juxtaposition may seem like an uppercut to the jaw after a tender kiss, but it works—so well, in fact, that Scratching Post has met rave reviews and has received a lot of airplay across Canada, including on *Much Music* (similar to MTV, it's shown throughout Canada and syndicated in the U.S.).

We talked to Nicole as Scratching Post (including co-guitarist Mark Holman, bassist Brian

Featherstone, and drummer Jeff Depew) was finishing a video to accompany the album.

What made you decide to buy the M100 and 4x12 cabinet?

Before, I was playing through a Peavey Bandit—if you can believe it. And I wanted a nice piece of equipment that would get the heavy sound I was looking for. I tried standard stuff, like a Marshall



PHOTO BY STEVE HUNTER

head and cabinet. The Rivera was sitting right next to it, so I plugged it in, gave it a shot, and there was no comparison. I said, "This is the amp for me!" I

love it. You can get such a heavy sound out of it.

What's your main guitar for getting that heavy sound?

I use a Gibson SG, which I've had for about five years. I've been playing for 10. I bought it secondhand—I believe it's about a 1985—and it has a great, warm sound. That's what I like about the Rivera amp, too: It's really heavy and really warm, but it's also very crisp. It's the perfect setup for me.

Anything else?

If I have any complaints about my setup, it's that it's so heavy. We call it The Beast. I have to cart this thing around by myself a lot and get it in and out of my car [*laughs*]. It looks great onstage; it's so tough-looking. Everything about it is great—how it looks, how it sounds. People come up to me all the time, freaking out, asking me what it is. Soundmen love it, too, because it's easy for them to get the perfect sound from it. They just stick a mike in front of it and put it through the P.A. system.

Do you use any effects?

No! It's straight in from the guitar. I don't need any effects!

How much did you use the Rivera setup when you were recording *Flamethrower*?

I used it on everything. We doubled the guitar parts, too. I guess I'm mostly a rhythm player, and Mark did some little lead things and squeals here and there. I used the Rivera for all of my parts, and Mark used it for a couple of his, too. It's the best.

ARTIST DRIVEN

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When I started with Eddie Bell Guitars, I had guitar players from the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and the Seventh Sons, and all these bands from the '60s that were very popular at the time, who would bring me these amplifiers and say, "Hey, kid. Can you make this thing louder?" Or, "Can you make it have more distortion?" This thing or that. So, I started experimenting with players' amps, trying to please them—changing capacitors, changing resistor values, increasing the gain. I had to build my own "lookup table" of what worked, what didn't work, what sounded better, what didn't. And I also had to translate these musicians' words into electronics meaning. For instance, if a musician came to me and asked if I could get more power out of his amp, he wasn't looking for more watts; he was looking for more *gain*. So I went through this stage of putting in bigger transformers, more tubes, and giving them more power. They'd say, "Oh, man! You just blew all my speakers!" I'd say, "You said you wanted more watts." He'd reply, "Well, you know. . . ." They wanted more gain, but musicians

didn't know how to ask for that, because they didn't know the difference between gain and power. I had to learn that by modifying amps and working with musicians until we hit upon what they wanted. You see, the sounds in a mind's ear are always difficult to translate, to put into verbal form. And then to have someone understand what you mean? That's always tough. So, that's where I started cutting my teeth; I was 15 at the time.

You later moved to L.A. and got into modifying amps for the West Coast's session players.

In 1975, when I moved to Los Angeles, Jay Graydon came to me and said, "Can you make this thing fatter? Can you put a 'fat' switch on it so that I can get more body and tone?" Okay. Try to translate that. But working with Jay, we found the frequency that made it sound sweeter and we worked on it and found what would make it fatter and make it sound good. Then Larry Carlton came to me, recommended by Jay, with his requests: "Can you make this Fender Princeton do this and do that?" Based on everything I'd learned, I was able to come up with a series of modifications that were repeatable, even through Fender and Marshall amps varied all over the place in their parameters. I

would actually have to compensate for each amp's variances to make the same results. You couldn't use the exact same parts across the board and expect the same results.

When did you start designing new models for the "major league"?

I worked at Yamaha in the 1970s because of all the work I'd done with Hollywood's musicians. They needed to find a way to make their amps sound right. They wanted me to apply some of my knowledge to modify circuits and evaluate the circuits that their engineers in Japan came up with. And that process involved working with musicians. I worked with Roger Balmer at Yamaha, who had the idea to create a panel of musicians to evaluate the amplifiers. Roger would have 30 musicians come by, and I would work with them and play each of these prototype amps and get their opinions, and compare them on the spot with their favorite amps. They would bring a tweaked Fender Deluxe and go, "Yeah, man, this is it," and then plug into the Yamaha prototype and say, "This ain't it." And it was a great way for the Japanese engineers and me to bring the amps closer to sounding

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DAVID TORN

The Loopmaster



W

hat's David Torn up to? Probably too much, at least for mere mortals. He toils endlessly in his studio, recording his own material, and performs onstage and in the studio with others (in late summer or early fall, he's scheduled to record with singer Jewel, as well as a group of all-star jazzers for a tribute to Joni Mitchell CD, plus he's scheduled to lay down tracks with Patrick O'Hearn, Gong's Bon Lozaga, Terry Bozzio, Caryn Lin, Dave Tronzo, Kit Watkins, and Mick Karn). He also played on the soundtrack to the movies *Fear* and *The Chamber*.

Since we last covered this powerhouse of the cutting edge in the Winter '94-'95 issue of *ROG*, David has released the critically praised, highly charged *What Means Solid, Traveler?* (CMP Records). In his "spare time," he penned a compelling article on looping that appeared in the September 1996 issue of *Guitar Player*. In it, he talks about looping—creating rhythms and musical building blocks by creating virtual loops of music. He also talks about how he uses his favorite gear, including his Rivera M100 combo amp (with one Celestion 12" speaker), as well as his pair of Hundred Duo Twelve combo amps. (In a story accompanying his *GP* article, Jesse Gress examines some of Torn's signature approaches, complete with musical examples.) Dig out the issue, order a back issue, or check out the story at the Torn Web internet site. Does this guy ever slow down? David has released a sampling CD on Q-Up Arts called Pandora's Toolbox, available in audio and formats for various samplers. Coming up: Two new Homespun video tapes called *David Torn: Painting With Guitar*. They cover how to use delay-based effects, colors, sound washes, orchestral effects, and other sonic alternatives. And he plans to tour this fall. Whew.

One day in the late spring, David must have temporarily mistaken the phone for his guitar, because he picked it up on the first ring, and we immediately got our hooks into him for info on his latest recording sessions for his upcoming album. . . .

How would you characterize the album you're working on?

This is a little bit more focused than the last album. The writing is a little bit more together and a little broader, and a little kick-assier.

How do you get it more kick-ass when you're working at home?

I just kind of take everything over. I actually recorded most of my guitar tracks direct to tape, which is unusual for me, but I found a way to get an absolutely killer sound with feedback and stuff, except at low volumes. I took the output right out of the Rivera M100 amp into an ADA Ampulator and into the mixer. Then I monitored the guitar over speakers. The sound is pretty close to what I get live, but at a low volume. So I would be tracking these ridiculous-sounding guitars at, like, 4:00 in the morning. It worked really, really well. Nobody knows, unless I tell them. If I say to an engineer that these guitars were all printed directly, they go, "Yeah, okay." They don't believe it.

So the M100 is the amp doing the sound-shaping?

Yeah. It's still pretty much the main source of this strange tone that I've been developing for the past couple of years—this big, fat, hairy beast thing. The recording is strange in that the construction of it—all of the original guitar loops, including riffs and rhythms—were recorded with the M100 with microphones directly to a DAT in improvisational style. Then I took all those riffs

and loops and stuff and chucked them into Notator Logic Audio, the computer program, on my Macintosh Centris 650, and arranged them into tunes. With the basic tracks recorded with microphones, I then did all the overdubs and solos and other parts with the M100 into the Ampulator to [Tascam] DA88 tape. It's sort of an odd blend of the improvisational and the arranged.

And you're working in multiple media.

Yeah, it's fun. It's a lot to organize, though. I succeed at keeping the track sheet to between 8 and 12 tracks per tune. Otherwise, it's way out of control. Sometimes I record onto DAT or the multitrack and then resample it with a sampler. It's sort of like *musique concrète*, but kind of funky—sort of like "purpose-driven *musique concrète*." I've really gotten into this because of necessity being the mother of all anal retention. I'm out here working alone. This record is a little different in that there are real drums on it, provided by some sample CDs and some friends who would send me their playing on DAT. Then I resample it and fit it in with the stuff that I had already improvised. It's kind of a strange way to work. What I like about it is that I maintain that original feeling of improvised stuff, in that all the riffs are done in a real improvised way. There's no prethought. The only overdubbing is live into a loop, and then I muck around with it. So the original feeling is really loose and sloppy.

I become completely anal when I arrange all the little bits and pieces. Then, when I overdub a melody or a solo, or whatever, it's back to the improvised thing, where it's all pretty much one or two takes, with no construction. I hate to punch in, especially when I'm working on my own, because it's really a pain in the butt. So I prefer to just record something, and if there are a couple of duff notes, I'll erase them, but I won't punch in to fix things. So you kind of get this process of improvisation, step two is this arrangement thing, and step three is improv again. It's kind of a funny blend of working with the material. I know I'm not the only one working like this, but I think the results are pretty different from other folks. Trent Reznor works the same way, functionally. Thomas Dolby works the same way. But I think the results are pretty far off the mark from each other, which is good.

Each one has their own tool kit, different goals.

I'm not sure if there are any other guitar players working this way. Looping is kind of an instrument in waiting. The proper device hasn't been built yet. It really stands separately from the norm of "effects mode," because functionally you've got live multi-track recording. There's no effect to that. You're just playing what you play and recording it. I can see that there's a difficulty in selling devices of that type without a long-range plan for educating people in how to use it.

Would you ever drop your M100 to use something else?

I have never even *considered* replacing my M100, since the day it was built. And the older the power tubes get, the better it sounds. It's really pretty amazing. The M100 continues to provide me. I just read this funny little quote that said something like, "The thing about being a creative musician is that what keeps you creative is the constant struggle to not be bored." I related to it directly, and I think about the M100 amp. I'm constantly finding some different tone, which I still have not been able to do with any other amplifier. I think it's the amp that comes closest to being an instrument, for me.

I N T E R N E T U P D A T E



here's a whole lotta Rivera goin' on in cyberspace, and if you have a computer and modem, you can keep up to date on the latest Rivera news at <http://www.rivera.com>, plus you can find out what our artists are up to. Biographies, tour dates, and lots of other details about some of our favorite players can be found at the following sites. (We will also be adding links to artists' sites in the near future.) Note that URLs (the addresses) can change, so if you don't connect, try a search engine such as Yahoo, AltaVista, etc. to search for them. Also, you'll find some unofficial pages, as well as official ones—and some are very good, developed by avid fans. Let us know about any other Rivera-related web pages you encounter, either by e-mail or by postal mail.

Tommy Denander <http://www.angelfire.com/pages1/td01/index.html>
Les Dudek <http://www.aimcmc.com/dudek.html>
<http://www.compulink.co.uk/~route66/music/dudek/home.htm>
Doyle Dykes <http://www.teleport.com/~richm/doyle.html>
Little Feat <http://www.ultranet.com/%7Eamygoode/FEATS.HTML>
Chris Duarte <http://www.hyperweb.com/duarte/duarte.html>
Craig Erickson <http://www.craig-erickson.com/>
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Kenny Lee Lewis <http://www.stevemillerband.com/>
Rick Nielsen <http://members.aol.com/melkel/index.html>
Will Ray <http://ro.com/~craigs/camphlle.html>
David Torn <http://ott-outreach.engin.umich.edu/torn/>
Toto (Holland) <http://www.euronet.nl/users/sazias/>

Don't forget that the Rivera Home Page includes back issues of ROG, press releases (new and old), and manuals for our M&S Series, TBR Series, R Series, and K Series amps, plus a complete catalog of Rivera products, reviews, and lists of U.S. and international dealers. Not enough stuff? Okay: This fall we're adding artist profiles, plus the Rivera Studio, a place where you can pre-audition Rivera amps, just by downloading audio files. As always, if you can't find answers to your questions, or if you need more information, you can contact us through e-mail, or even the tried-and-true routes of mail, phone, and fax.

ARTIST DRIVEN

Continued from page 4

like what the musicians wanted.

You can see that I worked with musicians extensively. And I used and stole gladly that entire process when I went to Fender, where I stayed from June 1981 until October 1984. As I developed new models for Fender, I took them to Nashville and New York. I had sessions in L.A. where I paid musicians to come and play through the amps.

Didn't you need to design something—anything—for the players to try out, before you incorporated their input?

Yes. I had clear ideas of what I thought the amplifiers should be, based on all the work I had done for musicians. Hence, the front-panel layout of Fender amps. So I had a starting point. And then, when I presented it to musicians, they could suggest different features, and I could try to accommodate them. By then, we had pretty much settled on the features and functions, and were primarily concerned with making sure that we had the right *tone*.

When you began creating your own amps at Rivera, did you start using ideas from musicians right away?

I went to my buddies here in town and showed off the TBR-1 prototypes. We actually changed some of the features as a result. We ended up installing more features based on their feedback. For instance, we added P-COMP, the P-COMP loop, and various push/pull functions.

How did you take their feedback?

I would rather take a design to musicians and have them find fault with it and describe what they hear but don't like. I actually enjoy that, and I don't take it as a personal affront. I don't think I have a "golden ear." I would prefer *their* ears evaluate the sound. It makes me feel more secure when they find fault than if they don't.

So you want your expertise to be the ability to tap into *their* expertise.

Exactly. I try to take my ego out of it as much as possible. If everybody else likes an amp and one guy hates it, his opinion may not be valid, but it doesn't personally offend me. I try to be open to criticism and feedback. If he has a lot of credibility as a player, I certainly have to listen to his comments. Somebody like a Vince Gill or a Chet Atkins or a Larry Carlton or a Vinnie Moore, or a Steve Lukather—they've got the ears, and you'd better listen to what they're saying.



RIVERA OWNERS
GROUP NEWSLETTER

Published by Rivera Research & Development
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KENNY LEE LEWIS

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playing a nice, clean blues lead, you can have that acoustic guitar quality riding on the top. You get this really nice attack, too.

Are using any signal processors?

I use a DigiTech GSP2101, but I only use the digital part for the effects; I don't use any of the tube part of it. I use it in the studio sometimes; if I'm lazy and don't feel like miking my amp, I'll plug in the 2101 and use its speaker simulator on its line out. It sounds pretty darn good. It saves a lot of time. I'm working on a jazz album right now, and on that I use a big-bodied Gibson, put the Rivera in the bathroom with a Shure SM57 mike, and that's how I get the tone. You've gotta have the tone!

What's your setup for other gigs?

I have a Rivera R55 (Fifty Five Twelve) that's been converted to KnuckleHead circuitry. I had to give up my reverb, so I just use an Alesis MicroVerb with it. I use that with just about any size band imaginable. It's loud enough to be a monitor, and it's got the tone, and as long as you mike it through a sound system, it can keep up with anything. And even if I don't get it blended into my floor wedge (monitor), it's still loud enough to get over the drums and horns. The amp's just great. I can't think of any other kind I'd want to use; I've checked them all out. For the size, weight, and tone, it does everything I need to have done.