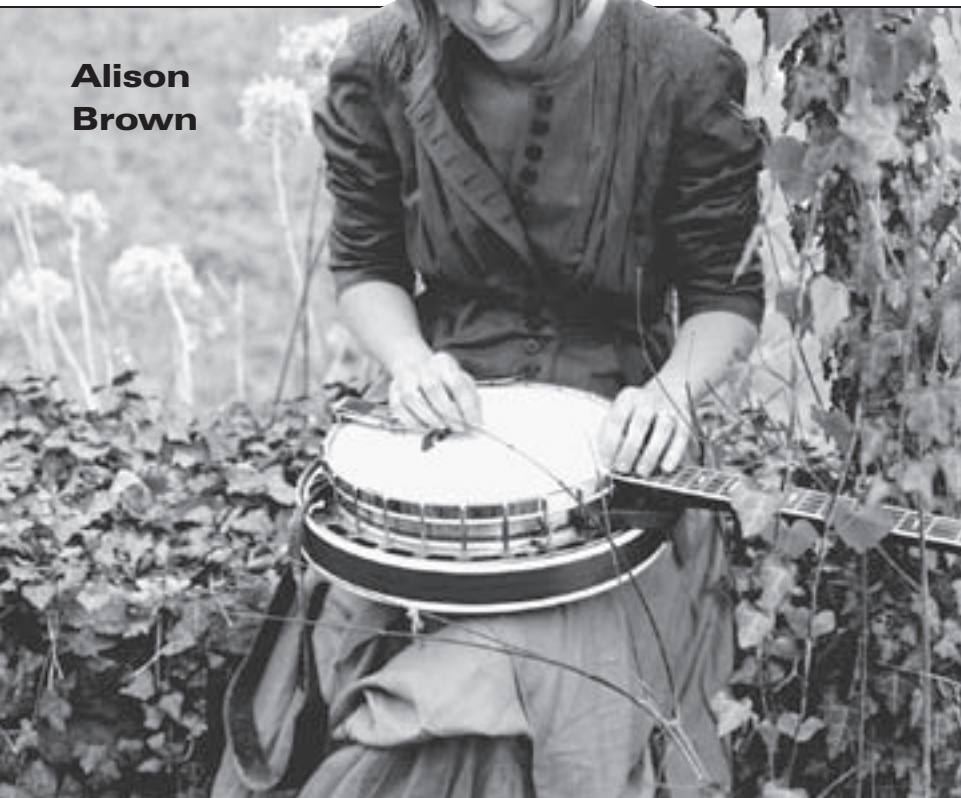


Alison Brown



A Win-Win Proposition

"It's an ill wind that blows no one any good." Shakespeare wrote that. Even the most recent international natural disaster, the tsunami in Indonesia, has had a few beneficial side-effects. *The Hands Across the Water* CD is one of them.

Producers Andrea Zonn and John Cutcliffe created *Hands Across the Water* as a vehicle whereby they could donate more money than they could gather on their own. They enlisted a remarkably talented and diverse group of American roots and Celtic musicians, including Darrell Scott, Muireann Nic mahlaoibh, Jim Lauderdale, Maura O'Connell, The Duhks, Bryan Sutton, Jon Randall, Martin O'Connor, Alison Brown, Tim O'Brien, Lunasa, Sharon Shannon, Jackson Browne, Solas, Mindy Smith, John Prine, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Bonnie Raitt, Blue Merle, Altan, Vince Gill, Paul Brady, Rodney Crowell, John Jorgenson, Stuart Duncan, John Cowen, Jerry Douglas, and Andrea Zonn. They used 27 different studios, 29 recording engineers, and over 100 musicians from Nashville to Sydney, Australia. Cutcliffe drove more than 10,000 miles and downloaded gigabytes of session tracks and mixes. Contributing artists chose their own tracks and let Zonn and Cutcliffe mold them by adding collaborators.

Given the diverse sources, the final results are far more focused than you'd imagine. Many artists found themselves working in genres outside their usual formats, such as Vince Gill's English-language version of the traditional Irish song "Let's Heal" or Jackson Browne's rendition of "Man of Constant Sorrow." Others, such as Beth Nielsen Chapman's rendition of "Be Still My Soul" are classic examples of an artist working within their genres. The Johnny Cash classic "40 Shades of Green" features the vocals of Paul Brady and Rodney Crowell, and typifies the synthesis of Celtic and country into a unique hybrid.

Given the necessity of the cut-and-paste recording, the sound quality on *Hands Across the Water* is nothing short of miraculous. Five years ago, engineers lacked the tools to make and send sound files across continents. Now, not only can tracks travel around the world, they do so with no sonic degradation. Editor and mixer Erick Jaskowiak and Compass Sound Studio deliver a world-class final mix, with all the warmth and natural ambience you could want.

Buy this CD. Not only will you be contributing to a good cause, you'll acquire a wonderful set of music. It's a win-win proposition. — SS



Various artists
Hands Across the Water: A Benefit for the Children of the Tsunami
Compass Records



North Mississippi All-Stars
Electric Blue Watermelon
ATO Records

The Dickinson brothers and their father connect again for a record that puts them at the forefront of the jam-band movement. And not only can they jam, but they write wonderful songs that don't rely only on long jams to get them across. The trio — Luther on guitar and vocals, Cody on drums, and Chris on bass and vocals, augmented by various friends — manages to mix Southern rock, funk, and country blues enough to make it sound new and fresh. They're not afraid to mix genres, even including a bit of hip-hop in some tunes, like the menacing "No Mo," a march with a repeating guitar hook and fine slide solo.

Friends like Lucinda Williams help out on cuts like "Hurry Up Sunrise." It's one of those Southern rock songs with a great slide solo and intertwined Allman-esque outro solos. The song is the first of three of the best songs I've heard this year. On its tail is "Stompin' My Foot." Odd wah guitar turns into major-league funk with a sometimes pointlessly obscene, but fun, lyric. By the time it's through its paces, we also get an almost-heavy-metal solo that showcases serious chops. From there we go to the stomper, "Bang Bang Lulu."

And there's plenty of other good stuff here, too. The country-blues of "Mississippi Boll Weevil" features layered acoustic and electric slide, with clever de-tuning. "Moonshine" is more Southern rock with some of the sweetest guitar sounds since Duane Allman.

The boys aren't slowing down. And with their legendary producer/father pushing them along, the growth should continue. North Mississippi All-Stars rank in the top echelon of rock bands, and definitely make rock's future look solid. — JH



Bill Kirchen
King of Dieselbilly
Hightone Records

You can smell the diesel as soon as the music starts pouring out of the speakers! Kirchen is a master guitarist who spent time with Commander Cody, a batch of friends called the Twangbangers, and several solo efforts for Hightone.

This is a compilation of the Twangbangers and Hightone stuff. There's not a lot of surprises, and that's the way we like it. You'll find pure Tele heaven on cuts like "Looking at the World Through a Windshield," "Little Bitty Record," "Dim

Lights, Thick Smoke," and not one, but two live versions of "Hot Rod Lincoln" that feature Kirchen and his trusty Tele referencing everyone from Johnny Cash to Chuck Berry to Elmore James to Link Wray to Cream to the Beatles to Hendrix. And, that's only about 1/5 of the artists he cites. There's a lot of truck-drivin' music, to be sure, but another killer is the nearly-six-minute version of Dylan's "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues." Kirchen sings with just the right feel, and his solo is a marvel unto itself. Soulful double-stops mix with twangy open-string pull-offs and plain-old rock and roll guitar that'll keep you smiling.

If you're unfamiliar with Kirchen's work, this is a good place to start. There's not a bad cut, though there is a warning that reads, "Warning: contains over 17 1/2 minutes of Hot Rod Lincoln." If you can deal with that, and you'll love this record. — JH



Carlos Guitarlos
Hell Can Wait
Nomad

This former guitarist with L.A.'s Top Jimmy & The Rhythm Pigs and fixture as a San Francisco street performer follows 2003's impressive *Straight From The Heart* with an even stronger outing. The songs are better; the production more polished; and Carlos' vocals (while ranging from ravaged to powerful) are an improvement.

His guitar playing can be aggressive, even ham-fisted, but suits the material and is invariably the perfect complement to his vocals, as well as those by guests Marcy Levy and Los Lobos' David Hidalgo. Levy, who was part of Eric Clapton's outfit, off and on, from the mid 1970s to the mid '80s, smoothes Guitarlos' rough edges without compromising his personality, providing backup on several numbers and dueting with Carlos on the country speedster "My Old Dead Body" and the Stax-flavored "I Found Someone," which the two co-wrote.

Hidalgo provides accordion on the Cajun two-step "Keep Me Satisfied," with Carlos on acoustic, and Blaster/T-Bird Gene Taylor lends organ to the jazzy ballad "Drinkin' Again" and barrelhouse piano to several others, but the repertoire is mainly blues, with a rock-solid rhythm section. Hidalgo and Guitarlos split vocal and lead duties on the Otis Rush-tinged "Shake My Blue" — David's melodicism contrasting nicely with Guitarlos' six-string sting (and one of his strongest vocals).

Beginning and ending the 19-song program are two solo acoustic numbers. "Love Me From The Start" shows that

Carlos is right at home in ragtime mode, while the stark "I've Been Dead" (which he co-wrote with Top Jimmy Koncek) is reminiscent of early Tom Waits, a running buddy of the late Koncek. — **DF**



Sons of Champlin
Hip Li'l Dreams
Dig Music

It's been more than 30 years since Bill Champlin released a record with the horn band Sons of Champlin. It's not like he hasn't been busy — he has been the only interesting thing about the band Chicago since the death of Terry Kath. His soulful voice brought about the only grit the band has seen since the early 1970s. Here, though, he found four original members and added a couple new ones, including guitarist Tal Morris.

The music here is what you'd expect from a Bay-area horn band; hints of '70s and '80s funk, as well as pop, rock, and elements of modern smooth jazz. Champlin's writing and voice rise to the occasion on cuts like "For Joy." The horn-driven funk lets Morris show off his chops. Lots of funky rhythm guitars that lead to a slightly wahed, dirty-toned solo with a run through jaw-dropping changes. "Dream On" is McDonald-era Doobies style funk. Chimey guitars and a heartfelt vocal from Champlin drive the lovely soul ballad, "I'm Not Your Lover." "Maybe" is ready for radio, with a hook big enough to drive a truck through, and Morris' playing is fittingly state-of-the-art. Any youngster who wants to be a hitmaker should really check out "Star Outa' You" — a nasty comment on a nasty industry. And Champlin has been around it long enough to know.

Champlin also plays some guitar, along with keyboards, and he wrote or co-wrote all of the tunes on this disc. While this is a band effort, it's definitely a showcase for his talents. Anyone with a love of the Bay-area sound of bands like the Sons, Tower of Power, or Cold Blood, will love this. — **JH**



Loggins & Messina
Sittin' In Again: Live at the Santa Barbara Bowl
Rhino

The saga of Kenny Loggins and Jim Messina is well-documented. Loggins was working on a solo record in the early 1970s, and Messina was set to produce. They ended up as a duo, and had numerous hits in different genres. They split, perhaps

Books

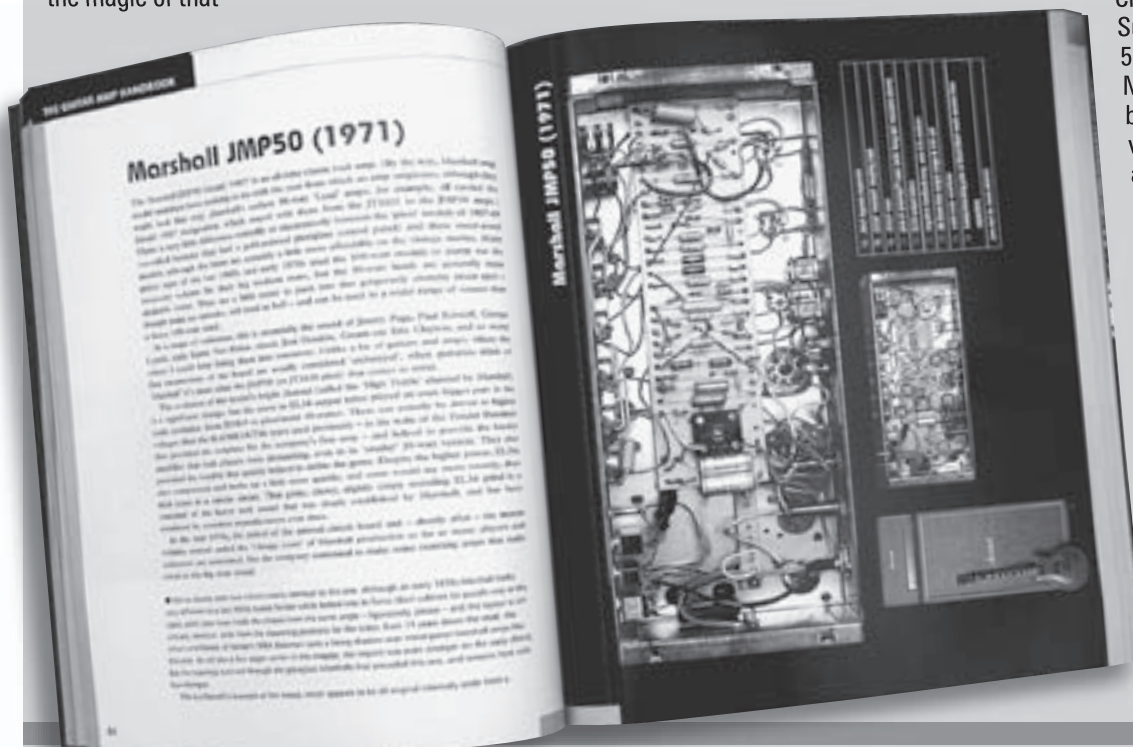
Understanding The Magic

It was Ritchie Fliegler who proclaimed the amplifier "the other half of rock and roll." And he was exactly right. Though consigned to the backline, the amp plays a huge role in a guitarist's sound, whether it's a cool, clean, jazzy tone, a blistering metal assault, or anything in-between.

This book provides an overview of the final link in the electrical chain and helps all guitar players, whether beginners or advanced, to better understand the magic of that

mysterious collection of wires, tubes, and transformers. It provides advice and insight on selecting the best amp for their style of music. It then helps them set up the amp to sound its best and shows them how to maintain or even to modify it. It also assists in crafting the most responsive instrument possible for their type of music.

Each facet of the amplifier is explored and detailed, from preamps and transformers, tube effects to outputs. And



Six Decades of the Fender Telecaster
By Tony Bacon
Backbeat Books

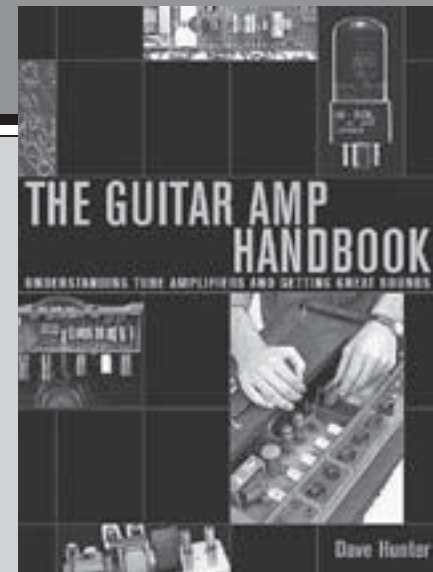
"Just a blank of wood with strings and a pickup" is the way we all like to think about the Fender Telecaster. It's the workhorse of guitars — steady, competent, ready to take anything we can throw at it. But this really sells short the complete innovation this instrument represented when first introduced.

In this homage to all things Tele, we learn the complete story of the world's longest-produced electric solidbody guitar, from how it was designed and developed by Leo Fender, how it took

by storm first the country, swing, and Tex-Mex musicians, and how it became a cornerstone of rock music in the hands of Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, and Roy Buchanan, among many others.

New interviews with Beck, James Burton, Bill Kirchen, and many others document the Tele's trailblazing importance, versatility, and straightforward playability, and its continuing appeal to new players. A compendium of photos documenting many Telecasters (and Esquires!) including vintage tone twisters and modern twang talkers. The fine color photos make up half the book, while the narrative details the history of the guitar and its place in the musical landscape.

A handy and easy-to-use reference section provides a guide to every Telecaster made, while charting changes and variations among the models offered today. Most of us who don't currently



The Guitar Amp Handbook: Understanding Tube Amplifiers and Getting Great Sounds
By Dave Hunter
Backbeat Books

the focus is always on tone. Extensive tutorials, parts lists, and diagrams enable the reader to build a range of classic-style amps. There are even fascinating full-color diagrams that get directly inside classic amps, including the Fender Champ, Vox AC15, Fender Super Reverb, Marshall 50-watt, and Traynor Bass Master. The author also goes behind the scenes to interview respected amp makers and get the inside story of their craft, and their views on building great amps.

While one book can't possibly provide complete information on all aspects of amplifiers, this is as good an overview as is currently available, and the myriad photos and diagrams drive home the understanding players need to better explore their options. Well laid-out and easy to read, this will be a fine addition to any electric guitarist's library. — **ECS**



Led Zeppelin: The Story of a Band and Their Music — 1968-1980

By Keith Shadwick
Backbeat Books

The appeal of this book is its focus on the music of one of the most successful and influential bands in the history of rock and roll. This focus, centered around the writing, recording, and performing of the classic compositions for which the band is known, separates it