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# Is John Christ too smart for

# METAL

John Christ is one of those players who can probably be lumped into that "too smart for heavy metal" category. Not that he isn't happy as pie rippin' out monster riffs for Danzig, but in his spare time the college-trained musician also writes television soundtrack material, runs a full MIDI studio, cuts wild guitar instrumentals, and meticulously evaluates his gear, all the way from giant amp stacks to a vast array of tiny plastic picks. He's into it all—a true renaissance man for the '90s metal crowd. So is J.C. too smart for metal? You decide.

#### On Danzig 4 and Fixing Solos

The new record is intentionally on the raw side—I prefer a slicker sound, but Glenn [Danzig] wanted a rawer vibe, reminiscent of some of the old songs from his earlier band, Samhain. There are more grooves and not as many changes. Glenn wanted more fuzzy guitars and basses on this record, too. I prefer a slightly cleaner and chunkier sound, but what are you gonna do? There aren't too many guitar dubs on there, either. Just some bent open chords, chugging, and some electric sitar parts. In "Little Whip" there's a really clean guitar sound, which is just a mic placed in front of an unplugged electric guitar's strings. *No amp!* There's some backwards stuff, too. In fact, "Can't Speak" is entirely backwards. The vocals and drums are forwards, but all the guitar parts are backwards. Then there's a track called "Let It Be

Captured," which is actually "Can't Speak" forwards. So we experimented with lots of things on there. And to play the backwards parts on "Can't Speak" live, I've been messing around in the rehearsal hall, and I think I've come up with a way to do it. I'm using a BOSS SE-70 which has some little reverse effects in there.

On "Going Down To Die," we ran out of studio time when I was supposed to cut my solo, so Glenn said, just turn it up and play. I worked out the beginning, but the end was spontaneous. In the last phrase, there was a strange bent note, but Glenn and the producers took a long note from earlier in my solo, turned it around, and fixed it. Personally, I don't like fixing solos, but the producers did, so again it was out of my control. You can hear the punch-out and everything—it sounds like an engineer's mistake. Oh well....

**AS TOLD TO JEFF VANDA**



# Is John Christ too smart for metal?

## On B.C. Rich vs. Ibanez

I'm still playing B.C. Riches and always will be, but Ibanez approached me and we're developing prototypes at the moment. I even used one of their RGs for some rhythm patterns and my solo in "Dominion." It's tough to make the conversion, though, since I've been playing B.C. Riches since 1983 and it's difficult to duplicate that tone. The B.C. Rich has a real warm, fat, round bottom-end that's great for chunkin'. Chords are really full-sounding. I have three Biches, including one that use to be a 10-string. I'd like to get a working 10-string, as well as a nice

Mockingbird. I also used the B.C. Rich and one of Erie Von's basses on "For Christ's Sake" [his solo track from *Guitar's Practicing Musicians, Vol. 3*]. I plan to do more guitar-intensive tracks like that in the future.

As for Ibanez, we're working on a version of the RG that has a built-in 22-fret maple neck through a koa body, with a Kahler tremolo and Paul Reed Smith pickups. Actually, I have PRS pickups in all my guitars, and I like the Kahler because Floyds make every guitar sound like a Strat to me. There's something a little *dinky* about them. You can rest your

hand on a Kahler, which is good for me because I do a lot of palm muting. My prototype also has bass frets, so I can really bend a note miles and miles beyond where they're supposed to be. Other Ibanezes don't seem to work with my rig—I've tried 'em all, but they just don't work with *my* sound. So that's why we're experimenting. Oh yeah, my strings are D'Aquisto 325 with .009s on top and .010s on bottom. I'd like to start using heavier strings in the future for better tone.

## On MIDI

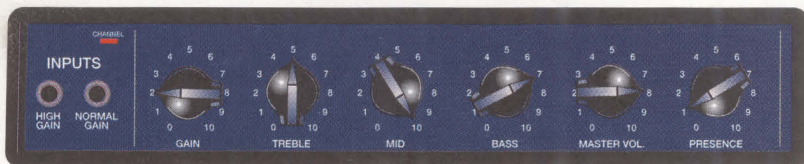
Although I'm just going for a big, meaty rock tone, the Bradshaw RSB-10 and the Patchmate allow me to do major switches instantly. For example, "How The Gods Kill" in concert starts with a clean part, goes to a really heavy riff, and then back and forth. Now, I could do that with my VHT's channel-switching, but the

## Christ's AMP SETTINGS



### MARSHALL 50 WATT

**A warmer tone that breaks up easier than on a 100-watt head. This tone is punchy and bright, chords are full, and you can use an overdrive or EQ pedal to push it over the top for leads. It's generic, but still a nice rock sound.**



### MARSHALL 900 SERIES HEAD

**This is good for a really pumpin' loud sound. The low-end of the cabinets really thumps hard, and chords just jump out.**



### VHT PITTBULL RHYTHM CHANNEL

**I've also been experimenting lately with using the lead-channel preamp for rhythm and then hitting the front of the amp with a distortion unit for solos. I don't want to say exactly which ones I use, since they change all the time, but BOSS overdrives are my favorite. I've been playing around with their DS-1 and Turbo Overdrive. And I don't know too many players who don't have a GE-7 graphic EQ in their rig somewhere. But my goal is to find a guitar/amp/speaker combination that will allow me to get rid of all my pedals.**

"I like Kahler tremos because Floyds make every guitar sound like a Strat to me."

MIDI allows me to also incorporate effects into the switches for my stage monitors [see a full diagram of John's rig in the Fall '94 issue of *GUITAR SHOP—Ed.*]. Add to that the various volume levels between each setting, which would be impossible to control with a volume pedal and get to the exact same level every time. My main amp is a VHT Pittbull head and VHT power amp into an old Marshall cab with vintage 30s—that's my dry center channel. Then I have two wet cabs on the outside for effects, mostly reverb.

My partner and I also have some promos for ABC movies, which we do in my home MIDI studio. I have a Tascam DA-88 and a sampler, as well as running Cue-Base software on an IBM computer, which we write on. We mostly use keyboards and strings on there, and then record the guitars with mics. It's a pretty cool little setup. No question, both live and in the studio, MIDI makes my life a lot easier as a musician. ■

# THE BICH IS BACK!

Ron Akiyama



The history of B.C. Rich dates back to 1949, when Bernardo M. Rico opened his first guitar shop in the Los Angeles area specializing in classical and flamenco guitars. His son, Bernardo C. Rico, soon became interested in his father's trade and in 1959 began building his own classical guitars and play-

ing flamenco in concert. In the late 1960s Rico was persuaded by his friends who played folk music to make steel-string acoustic guitars. His hand-made steel string guitars gained notoriety in the late '60s and early '70s, and then in 1973 Rico's rock musician friends encouraged him to build a quality electric guitar. He took on their challenge and decided to create an electric guitar that was very different in construction and design from any of the acoustic instruments he had built in the past. It was necessary to use a separate piece of wood for the neck of an acoustic guitar, but for ultimate sustain in an electric guitar he believed that the neck should extend all the way through its body. He envisioned a guitar with a two-octave/24-fret fingerboard and heel-less neck with a cut-away that allowed access to every fret. Thinking that their ideas could merge well together, guitarist Domenic Troiano of the Guess Who introduced Bernie to Neal Moser, a designer who had recently developed a versatile new electronic circuit for electric guitar. By collaborating their ideas, together they developed the B.C. Rich Seagull, an innovative design that featured a radically shaped body and a unique electronic system, which made its first appearance on the market at the NAMM Show in 1975. Other original Rico/Moser designs that evolved during the mid '70s were the Eagle, Wave, and Mockingbird.

Over the years many of Rico's clients expressed interest in finding a 12-string electric guitar that would feel and play like a 6-string. He considered the advantages and disadvantages of a 12-string instrument: many 12-string guitars are neck-heavy, the low-end usually gets lost with the octave strings, the neck has to be fatter to handle the tension, and tuning tends to be confusing with six machines on each

by Lisa Sharken

side of the headstock. On the other hand, 12-string guitars are characteristically full and rich in tone. The result of their efforts to develop an instrument that would have the best of both worlds was the Rich Bich, which made its debut at the NAMM Show in 1978. By using hard-rock maple for the neck, there was no problem for it to withstand the additional tension caused by the extra strings. The neck was cut to the same dimensions and scale as a regular 6-string, with 6 tuners on the headstock and also strung and tuned as a regular 6-string. Unison strings were added to the first and second strings and octave strings to the third and fourth, just as on a 12-string. But unlike a 12-string, the fifth and sixth strings were not doubled to keep the bottom-end sounding like a standard 6-string, even though the 12-string effect would still be there on the top strings for chords and leads. The bottom of the body was cut out to install the tuners for the unison and octave strings, so it would not be confusing to tune nor neck-heavy from having the extra tuners on the headstock. The unison and octave strings are strung through the back of the headstock.

The fingerboards on the Rich Bich were made of Brazilian rosewood with jumbo frets and large mother-of-pearl "cloud" inlays. Rich Biches could be ordered with a choice of figured Hawaiian koa, hard-rock maple or African black walnut for the sides of the body. Most of the figured wood was given a clear finish to show off the beauty of the grain. Stock pickups in all B.C. Rich guitars were two DiMarzio Dual Sound humbuckers.

Most people are totally baffled by all the knobs and switches for the electronics, but it's really much simpler than it appears. There are two volume controls (one for each pickup), a pickup selector switch, a master tone control, two preamp volume controls, two preamp on/off switches, a six-position varitone control, two dual-sound switches, and one in/out-of-phase switch. The varitone switch creates a different sound in each position, regardless of which pickup is selected. Dual-sound switches split the coils on each pickup from humbucking to single-coil.

Some of the artists who played B.C. Rich guitars in the mid to late '70s were Eric Clapton, who appeared in the first Seagull ad in 1975, Dick Wagner of the Alice Cooper Band, who appeared in the first Mockingbird ad, and Joe Perry and Brad Whitford of Aerosmith. Craig Chaquico of Jefferson Starship and Rick Derringer were also Rich Bich players.

The '80s became the decade of heavy metal, big hair, and pointy guitars. B.C. Rich gained popularity as the heavy metal guitar of choice, and as the artist roster grew, exposure increased tremendously. Guitarists and bassists in almost every rock band on the rise played a Rich, and it became a big part of their image as well. During this time B.C. Rich developed more radical-looking shapes like the Warlock, Ironbird, Rick Derringer Stealth, and a Strat-style guitar they called the ST. Artists such as Slayer, WASP, Lita Ford, Dave Mustaine in both Metallica and Megadeth, John Christ of

Danzig, and C.C. DeVille of Poison have all played B.C. Rich guitars. And don't forget Spinal Tap, which has forever immortalized the Rich bass.

B.C. Rich guitars have made a comeback in the '90s, which started after Slash of Guns 'N Roses was seen playing a red Mockingbird in the video for "You Could Be Mine" from the *Terminator 2* movie soundtrack. Now '70s and '80s B.C. Rich guitars are more popular than ever to collectors, and Bernie Rico is once again producing B.C. Rich handmade electric guitars in very limited production. ■

[SPECIAL THANKS TO NITEBOB AND PAUL ULINO FOR OLD CATALOGS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS. GUITAR COURTESY OF PAUL ULINO.]

*Lisa Sharken is temporarily sitting in for Baker Rorick, who has just made a traumatic move from the big city out to rural America. He'll be back stalking the wild relic in the next issue, once he's figured out that he can't go out for a fresh bagel at two a.m. anymore.*



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