

RICK DERRINGER

Continued from page 23

set up so that everything can sit on the body, and you'll be in business. That also helps these pickups do their job. It's loud; this particular guitar [his stage guitar] is more of an "in-person" guitar just because it's designed to get the most out of personal appearances.

What sort of strings are you using?

Ernie Ball Super Slinkies with an unwound third.

Any fret work done?

Yeah, I like big frets better than the little ones because they allow me to hold onto the strings if you bend them. On Fretless Wonder-style guitars, you can slide up and down the guitar, and play real fast, and all that fantastic stuff, but if you go to bend a string it's a simple law: If you press on a thin string with a finger and nothing to bridge that string between, when it gets to where it pulls, it's going to slide right out from under your finger. So, if you give two poles — which is what the frets are — a little more height, that offers somewhere for the string to go in your finger — pushes the string into your finger and enables you to hold onto it, so that you can stretch it real far and real easy. It never slides out from under your fingers.

How often do you change your strings?

About every three shows, on the road. In the studio a string will last longer.

Do you ever use anything else on stage?

I have a real Explorer, and that's a nice sounding guitar, and I have a Les Paul that I like a lot. It's about a '58 Sunburst, with all white humbuckers. Pretty one, not modified in any way. It's got big frets on it. I've got these frets on everything. I have a Gibson 355. It's about a '58, or '59. Big frets come on those guitars naturally [laughs]. I have another guitar by Charlie LoBue that's a Honduras mahogany version with no

binding. It sounds a little more like a Les Paul, and it might be a little more ideally suited to the studio, even though it's not quite as good as the other for the stage. I have a Strat that I use in the studio, usually for a specific kind of Stratocaster-sounding thing.

Do you practice systematically?

Yeah, all kinds of stuff: Chromatic scales, a regular major scale, a whole-tone fifth scale, and just stuff to keep my fingers moving and loose, so they don't freeze up on me. Of course, a lot of times I learn solos note-for-note from records, and because of that I learn plenty of licks. I just try to use everything that I've heard, to come up with music that fits whatever I'm playing.

Do you ever work for an improvisational feel during performance?

A lot. But I feel that people would like to hear some solos like they hear them on the radio, so I just play the solos from hits exactly like they were, though I do try to play them as good as they can be played every night. Other than those few songs, when it comes to a solo, that is an improvisational section.

Where do you get your licks?

Probably it started out from chords — knowing a combination of those structures and patterns, then growing into scales, and then into a more correct knowledge of musical theory. I try all the time to go toward being totally fluent. In other words, some people can create exactly what comes into their minds instantaneously with their voice. In my mind, the ideal point to get to on the guitar is where you don't have to think about scales, keys, notes, harmonic structures, none of that stuff. You can just play music fluently. It's a hard place to come to, but that's what I'm trying to do.

Did you ever sit down and actually study theory?

Not too much. It always seemed like too much work for

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