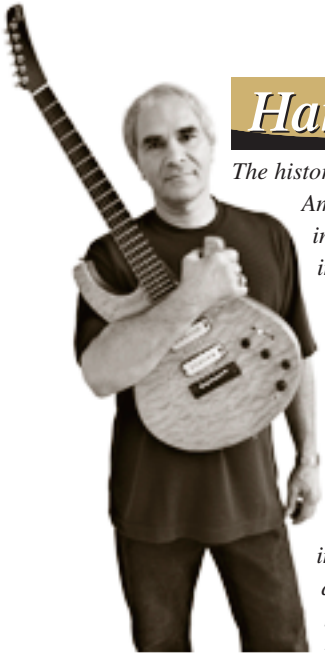
TQR: What's on the horizon – what would you like to do in the future?

I'm waiting on Keith… The Stones are touring now as you know, but we have 16 CD's recorded that we did at his house in Connecticut. We received a Grammy for one of the songs

we did called "Timeless" that was on a Hank Williams tribute album with Sheryl Crow, Bob Dylan and others, and the record won a Grammy for Best Country Album in 2001. The recordings with Keith were done over a year and half at his house and they are all rough mixes. He wants to put a band together and play these songs when the current tour is over. I'm looking forward to that and it should be a lot of fun because he's great to work with. I can never understand what he's *saying* to me (laughing), but we just sit down and he starts playing something and I jump in and off we go. Keith also has a lot of great old tube amps that sound wonderful, including Lou's amp (Lou Rosano). I'll stay with Les as well, and I occasionally do some special things with the Jimmy Sturr Orchestra as a featured artist. I'm having a very good time at my age. TQ

www.loupallo.com



Harvey Citron

The history of guitar building in America has been chronicled in many published works during the past twenty years, but the depth of research and the general scope of these historical accounts has been incomplete, at best. While companies like Gibson, Gretsch, Fender, Epiphone, Martin and Guild manufactured guitars in great numbers for decades, small, independent builders have always worked in their shadow, and most of them have received very little if any recognition. Frankly, it would seem that to become a guitar builder today requires a considerable inheritance, marrying well, or blind faith buoyed by sheer stupidity. This is a tough, tough business where many an impassioned artisan has fallen on their spoke shave, yet builders continue to build because they must. It's simply what they do.

Harvey Citron's "fallback" career move as a musician was to earn a graduate degree in architecture, but he was called to build guitars and basses and has been doing just that since the early '70s. In 1975 he co-founded Veillette-Citron guitars, and as an independent luthier he designed the Guild X92 Breakaway. Today, Harvey builds his distinctive line of bass, baritone and 6-string guitars in his shop in Woodstock, NY, clearly unencumbered by the limitations of the past.

TQR: Let's go back to the beginning and discuss how you initially became enamored with guitars.

My mom purchased a Martin 0017 at Manny's in NYC for $45 in the mid 1950's for herself with the hope that I would play as well.

TQR: Where were you living?

In Brooklyn. I started taking lessons from a classical guitar teacher at a "Y" when I was 11 years old. I wasn't in to classical – I was in to rock. I studied for about six months basically learning chords, and then using what I learned to play rock songs. My ears were sharper than my reading skills.

TQR: Did you play in high school in bands?

No. I played guitar in the jazz band in junior high school. That was where I got stung with the performance bug. When the curtain came up at my first show, I couldn't believe the rush I got. I had to have it more and more. I played trombone in the music

-continued-

class and in the junior and senior orchestras. By the end of the 7th grade I was playing guitar in a band at a dance every Friday afternoon after school at another local public school. I was getting paid for playing guitar and I totally loved it. I also had a little trio with Carmine Appice…

TQR: Carmine from Vanilla Fudge and Beck, Bogart and Appice…


Carmine Appice

He lived on my block. We were buddies and we were called the Rocketones. He always said, "I'm going to be a rock and roll star." At that time I had put a De Armond soundhole pick-up in my Martin and bought an Ampeg Rocket amplifier when I was about 12 or 13. I was electric!

I grew up with a lot of music around me. I don't think I saw music as a career at 13, so I took a test for one of the prestigious high schools in New York (Brooklyn Tech.) It was basically a prep school for engineering – all of the academics, physics, four years of drafting, pattern making shop, machine shop, foundry, strength of materials labs, etc. I was going to be an engineer or an architect. Just before I started high school we moved, and I lost connections with all the people I had played music with. Carmine was no longer in my area and I didn't meet any other music people. I only played a little guitar and I didn't do any serious guitar playing in my high school years. I went to college in the Bronx studying pre-architecture where we had a free period, and I got together with another guitar player to play and we both brought our amps. The second or third time we did that, a guy who called himself "Flip" walked in and asked us if we wanted to do a recording session. That was a big "yes" for me and I was hooked again.

TQR: What followed?

I proceeded to do worse and worse in college and I flunked out. I thought I was going to be a rock star and then I got scared and went to summer school to get my grades up so I could go back to school. I was definitely leading a double life, and at one point I had three bands. I was taking 18 credits in college, architecture… lots of lab courses that required more class hours. I was traveling four hours a day to go to

City College School of Architecture and I rehearsed with the bands several nights a week. If I wasn't playing, I was going out to hear live music in New York City, Long Island, Brooklyn, even the Bronx. There were clubs in virtually every neighborhood and the clubs had live music at least two nights a week.

TQR: When did you become involved with building guitars?

My initial interest in guitar making came from the perspective of both a player and as a designer, and I studied architecture with Joe Veillette. We were friends through college, and we later formed Veillette-Citron. He had a Gibson guitar that broke at the headstock (a classic problem with Gibsons) and he brought the guitar to every reputable repair shop in New York, but no one repaired it properly. Michael Gurian was teaching a class in guitar making at a "Y" in NYC, and Joe took the class basically to find out how to repair his guitar. He loved guitar making and left his job as an architect to build guitars full time. He started with an electric that hung on his wall for several years. I always asked him about it, hoping he would finish it (I was playing professionally at the time), and he always shrugged. One day, after I asked the same question again, he took the guitar off the wall, handed it to me, and told me to finish it. This happened in 1974.

I had a friend, Bob Costaldo, who worked at Dan Armstrong's shop on La Guardia Place in NYC. That was probably the premier guitar shop in the world at the time, and he showed me how to wire Joe's electric.

-continued-

While I was at his place, another friend, Sal Palazolla, came in and showed me a pickup. I said, "Boy, this really looks like fun. I could probably make that," and he said, "Sure you can. I'll help you." He was working downstairs at Dan Armstrong's shop with Bill Lawrence. I wired Joe's guitar, brought it up to his shop in Grahamsville, NY on a Friday night, and insisted that we finish the remaining woodwork that weekend. When we strung that guitar up on Sunday morning and plugged it in, I felt like I was witnessing a birth. It was an amazing rush, and I was hooked.

TQR: What were you playing at that time?

My main guitar was a Gibson 335.

TQR: You weren't going to be ready to build one of those anytime soon. You must have started off with solid bodies.

Yeah. After stringing up Joe's electric I had to build guitars. I bought some wood from Joe that very Sunday and started

building a neck, took off Monday from my architecture job, and went home with a very good start on a neck. I invited Sal to come over and teach me how to wind pickups. He brought me a spool of 42 gauge wire and showed me what was necessary (how to tension the wire), etc. He brought me both Alnico 5 and Indox 5 ceramic magnets. I built a very crude pickup winder using an electric drill on a horizontal stand, erector sets parts, and a very cheap counter that I bought for probably $1. I built pickup bobbins out of plexi-glass (1/16" thick for the flanges, and 1/4" for the core). I cut the pieces on an inverted jigsaw that I attached to a crude table.

I would talk to Sal all the time and ask questions, and he told me about how you could even put dead wire on a pickup to change the sound. I designed and built a body, built some very unusual dual coil pickups, and my guitar had a control section that unplugged. The lower part of the guitar came off via four " tip ring" sleeve connectors and each pickup coil connected via one plug. This was the physical and electronic connection mechanism. The coils were all wound with a different number of turns (unmatched humbuckers). I think the neck pickup used a ceramic magnet, and the bridge pickup had an Alnico magnet. I set up switching that would allow you to select any coil, select parallel or series in each pickup, internal phase reversal, and whole pickup phase reversal.

Additional controls included master volume, separate volume and tone for each pickup, 3-position pickup selector, and slide switches for the pickup functions.

TQR: Did you spend any time tearing down production pickups to discover what made them tick?

No, never. Friends started asking me to build pickups for them and customize their guitars. I customized a couple of Telecasters by building a neck pickup (humbucker), adding a new control layout featuring lots of pickup switching and changing the bridge. Joe refinished the bodies. I also built pickups for an old Fender Coronado and an Epiphone. These were lightly wound, narrow aperture humbuckers with plexi glass covers, 12 adjustable polepieces (6-32 socket set screws), and they were cast solid in polyester resin.

TQR: What happened that enabled you to flip the switch and get into building full steam?

I had been testing strings for Tom Vinci during this period, and when Joe was broke, Tom gave Joe and his wife and baby access to his old shop to live in and allowed Joe and I to set up our first shop there. Joe and I decided to collaborate on a couple of prototypes – a neck-through guitar with a 25 5/8" scale, and a neck-through body bass with a 32" scale. We had

very few tools, and yet the prototypes came out great. The necks were laminated maple with 1/32" thick black veneers between the laminations. The body wings were also maple, and the instruments were finished in clear gloss nitrocellulose lacquer. They featured dual coil humbuckers that I built; controls included master volume, volume and tone for each pickup, and phase reversal switch. Bridges, tailpieces, knobs, strap pins, and the rear cover plate were all made in our shop out of brass.

Tom Vinci let us show our prototypes at NAMM in exchange

-continued-

for helping him with his booth. The reaction was really wonderful, and some friends of ours who were working with Tom as distributors of his strings saw the reaction and told us they'd like to distribute our guitars. They bought our prototypes, giving us enough money to buy a band saw and pin router, and we were off.

From 1975-1983 Joe and I were partners in Veillette-Citron, and we produced 25 5/8" scale neck-through 6 & 12-string guitars (also some 24 1/8" scale guitars), neck-through 34 1/8" scale 4 & 8-string basses, and later glue-in neck guitars, basses, and the first production Baritone guitar, which occurred out of a collaboration with John Sebastian. We produced about 400-500 instruments in our partnership.

TQR: When and how did the inspiration for the Citron guitars we know today develop?

I'm essentially a designer first, and design and solving problems light me up. At Veillette-Citron, I was originally a designer, but my job became that of an owner and manager, running the setup department and machine shop (bridge, tail-

piece, knobs, and strap pin production), pickup production, handling the ordering, advertising, trade shows, repairs, touch ups, etc. In the beginning there was lots of design, but as time went on at V/C I felt like a factory worker. The primary objective was to build enough product to keep the business going. It sucked up all of my energy and wasn't nurturing my soul. I decided to design a new guitar on my own and pursue having another company build and market it. I came up with an idea to design a guitar that traveled small, but felt like a full-sized guitar. This idea came to me while on a camping trip where I didn't take a guitar with me because there was no room in my sports car. The guitar had an upper portion that was removable via a quick release pin and stored in the case next to the neck, creating a very small rectangular package. The headstock featured three on a side tuners and was very small. I also designed a very cool trem and locking nut on that guitar. The prototype had a neck through body, one-piece mahogany neck, mahogany body wings, ebony fingerboard, and my own "Strat" style single coil pickups. That guitar was produced in small quantities by Guild in the mid 80's, and it was called the Guild-Citron X92 Breakaway. I

modified the design for Guild, putting the electronics on a pickguard and using a glue-in maple neck instead of the mahogany neck through. This model featured two single coil pickups, humbuckers in the bridge position, all by EMG, and a Kahler trem.

I also became a product reviewer for *Guitar Player* and later, *Bass Player* magazine, and I also made a guitar repair and maintenance video tape for Homespun. I was playing professionally all the time, never on the road because I was raising my son by myself (my wife died when my son Jesse was 3 years old). I also worked in a local production facility building custom furniture, and took on guitar and bass repairs.

One inspiration that came to me during that period was to build a hollow bass that would bridge the gap between acoustic and electric. The hollow body basses that were being built at the time by Martin, etc. were neck heavy, had a very long reach to the first fret, didn't sound that good unplugged, and weren't amazing plugged in, either. Plus, they were very uncomfortable. In the period between Veillette-Citron and Citron, a friend of mine brought a PRS with three P90 pickups to me. He wasn't happy with the sound and asked me to rewind the pickups. When I took the pickups apart I noticed that they were using ceramic magnets, and I knew he would be happier with Alnico. I rewound the neck pickup with a gauge of wire and a number of turns that I thought would sound good, and since I didn't have the appropriate


Tim Shaw

size Alnico magnets, I decided to try some very small Alnicos that were sent to me many years before by Tim Shaw, who was working for Gibson at the time. The pickup sounded amazing. It was warm, clear, and its voice was somewhere between a "Strat" pickup and a true P90. I decided to use those

-continued-

magnets in the other two pickups without even rewinding them, and it was a complete success. I thought that if I ever built guitars again, I would build those pickups.
Also, in the period between Veillette-Citron and Citron I couldn't imagine manufacturing again because my experience at V/C kept me so spaced out from design. I thought of guitar making as requiring a factory, and that experience sucked me dry. I thought the only way to explore my designs was by designing for the larger companies and building prototypes, however, my experience with that was not so good. The Guild deal was a bust, and I got ripped off by an offshore manufacturer. It wasn't until Michael Tobias moved to my area that I realized I could go back to my roots, so to speak. He was building on his own, and he was instrumental in my getting back to guitar building. He answered a lot of questions, even helped me move equipment into my shop, and he has been a great ally. I lost sight of the fact that I could build on my own and submerge myself in design and build lots of totally new stuff.

My first was a "Tele" that I built from Warmoth parts. I used my custom compensated three-saddle bridge concept for that guitar (I will discuss that later in describing the CT1). Then I built two 3-pickup solid bodies – one with my single coil pickups, a Wilkinson trem bridge and Steinberger tuners. The body was mahogany with a curly maple top and mahogany neck. The second had an ash body, wenge top, maple neck, Fender custom shop Texas Special single coils and a light weight Wilkinson trem bridge.

When I started building Citron guitars and basses in 1994 I designed and built my AE-4 – a 3" thick hollow mahogany body 4-string bass with a mahogany/maple/mahogany 3-piece bolt on neck, curly maple top, tuners at the butt, and a bridge placed at the butt like a Fender, headless to insure that the instrument would balance well, and featuring an intonation adjustable wooden bridge, one magnetic pickup, a Seymour Duncan Perfect Timbre under top transducer, and Bartolini active circuit. I finished the body in a red to gold burst in gloss polyester, while the neck was stained to match the body and finished in polymerized tung oil. The polyester looks great and is extremely durable. The oil finish on the neck makes it feel real comfortable, like it is already worn in. The first one sounded amazing. It had such a wide dynamic range, and it had a blend control that could dial between the magnetic pickup and transducer. But it was more prone to feedback than I liked. I also wasn't too fond of being bound by the headless hardware that was available. It bound me to their string spacing, and I wanted more flexibility. Also, since I was hollowing out the mahogany body rather than bending the sides, the body was heavy enough to allow for that model to balance perfectly with a headstock. I tried a Fishman under saddle piezo, and things got a little better, but I had to give up the intonation-adjustable bridge. I always wanted separate EQ for the piezo circuit and the magnetic pickup. I spoke to Rob Turner at EMG, and he put together an electronic circuit that was able to give me what I wanted. I continued to experiment, bringing the thickness of the body down gradually from 3" eventually to 2 1/2" without sacrificing tone, adding a waist cut for comfort and bringing down the width of the instrument a little. Collaboration with Stephen Swallow yielded a new intonation-adjustable wooden bridge with 6 piezos and 3 adjustable buffer circuits for his 5-string bass.

When I first debuted Citron guitars and basses at NAMM it was with three instruments – the hollow body acoustic-electric bass that I called my AE4 (acoustic-electric 4-string bass), a three pickup 6-string "Strat" inspired guitar which I called my CS1. It was a mahogany body capped in quilted maple with a bolt on one-piece mahogany neck, ebony fingerboard, Steinberger headstock tuners that were absolutely wonderful, and a Wilkinson trem. I put three of my own P90 style pickups on this guitar. The neck pickup was very similar to the one I rewound for my friend, but the middle and bridge pickups had two different gauges of wire and different number of turns on them. I termed these pickups "custom blended." Each pickup was voiced for its position on the guitar. The body was finished in a red to gold burst in polyester and the neck was stained to match and finished in polymerized tung oil. The third instrument, my NT5, was a 35" scale neck-through body 5-string

-continued-

bass featuring curly maple/purple heart/curly maple neck with ebony fingerboard, curly maple body wings capped in Macassar ebony with a 3/16" thick lamination of Purple Heart between the ebony and maple. I used two Bartolini humbucking pickups and a Bartolini active EQ circuit, and it was finished in polymerized tung oil.

My next guitars included my CT1, a "Tele" inspired guitar, AEG (acoustic/electric guitar, counterpart to the AE4). The body was finished clear in gloss polyester, and the neck polymerized tung oil. The inspiration for the CT1 came from the fact that all the better "Tele" players I knew used three-saddle bridges and all insisted that their guitars played in tune. I don't believe that is possible. I believe that they sacrifice intonation for the tone achieved by pairs of strings sharing the same saddle. I designed a three saddle bridge that I could custom compensate by leaving the shorter string at the edge and cutting the saddle back for the longer string. Realizing how eclectic "Tele" players are, I decided to make the electronics, controls, strap pins, length of body, virtually identical to the "Tele". I made the body a bit narrower, and streamlined the shape, kind of giving the design my own signature. The headstock is also tilted back, as are the headstocks on all my instruments.

AEG-MUSCATELO

AEG: The inspiration for this one probably came from my old Martin and the thump I got out of it. I decided to use one of my single coil (neck position) pickups in the sound hole, and put a piezo under the saddle. I made the body virtually hollow except for the fact that it was solid under the bridge, with the strings going through the body. I worked with Rob Turner at EMG to develop a circuit that could have discreet controls for the piezo and magnetic pickup. Control layout includes master volume, blend (between magnetic and piezo), passive tone for the magnetic pickup, sweepable mid and stacked treble/bass for the piezo, and a mono/stereo switch. There is one output for the guitar ad it works in mono or stereo. In my opinion the two systems (piezo and magnetic)

do best being amplified completely differently from one another. The magnetic pickup likes a relatively low wattage amp with speakers able to break up a bit, while the piezo does best with higher wattage (lots of headroom), speakers that don't break up, and a system capable of delivering clean tone from the top end to the bottom. That is why the guitar is mono/stereo. It is not left/right. The magnetic circuit goes out the tip, and the piezo goes out via the ring in a tip/ring and sleeve special deep panel jack with battery switching. I use an 18 volt system on this guitar for increased headroom, and the guitar sounds huge. You can shred with it, you can use it as an acoustic, and anything between. It can sound like a jazz box. You can play slide on it and use distortion on one channel and keep the other side completely clean in any proportion you choose – very versatile. It has its own tone for sure

with lots of punch and amazing dynamic range from the slightest caress to thrashing it. It is not delicate. The body is hollowed out from a 3" thick piece of Honduras mahogany, and the top is spruce. The body finishes at 2 1/2" thick. The neck is one-piece Honduras mahogany and the fingerboard is generally rosewood. The bridge is usually made out of the same material as the fingerboard (as is the soundhole inlay, headstock plate, and truss rod cover plate); the saddle is a thick custom compensated piece of bone.

CC1

The next guitar I designed was the CC1. It was inspired by the "Strat", "Les Paul" and "335". I chose to make the original body out of Honduras Mahogany, chamber it, and put a very thick (3/4") bookmatched piece of curly maple on top, that I carved. The body is 2" thick. The neck is bolt-on, one-piece Honduras mahogany. This trem equipped model features the same three custom blended single coil pickups I build for my CS1. Controls include master volume, master tone, and 5-position pickup selector. The body shape is actu-

-continued-

ally the same as the AEG, but the top edge of the body has a special round. The CC2 is the same as the CC1 but with two humbuckers, tune-o-matic bridge and stop tailpiece.

CF1A

Inspired by the "Firebird," whose sound and look I loved, I set out to design one that was much more comfortable to play. The Firebird is neck heavy, and the reach to the first fret is very far. I traced a reverse Firebird and with tracings of two very comfortable guitars over it ("Strat" and "Tele") it was easy to see where the problem came from – too much body beyond the bridge, and no horn to hang the strap from was a deadly combination. It pushes the guitar way out to the left. I redesigned the body, decreasing the material beyond the bridge and moving the neck deep into the body, putting them more in the locations of the "Strat" and "Tele." I decided to give it a 25 1/2" scale length like the "Fenders," make the body 1 5/8" thick to keep it light, and add a waist cut for comfort. I also decided to give it a twist and use a "Tele" style bridge with the strings going though the body just for fun. This model started out with a mahogany body capped in quilted maple, one-piece mahogany neck, "Firebird" style humbucker in the neck position, and "Tele" style pickup in the bridge, and the model has gravitated to korina body with quilted maple top, mahogany neck, and two of my new custom blended humbuckers – still using a "Tele" style bridge.

AEG3

In my playing with hollowness in guitars, I decided to try something between my AEG and CS1. I wanted it to have much of the character of the AEG but more pointed toward electric. The 2 1/4" thick mahogany body with a spruce top is very hollow, but solid under the bridge. The neck is mahogany, and the strings go through the body. I use a wooden bridge because I am convinced that a wooden bridge with bone saddle can do all that a metal bridge can do tonally and more. In conjunction with the piezo, it enhances the warmth and openness of the sound. A metal bridge cannot do that. I use the same set of Citron single coil pickups as are on my CS1 And CC1, and an EMG piezo, as well as an EMG BT for active EQ of the piezo. Controls include master volume, blend (between magnetic pickups and piezo), passive tone for the magnetic pickups, treble cut/boost and bass cut/boost for the piezo, and a mono/stereo switch.

CG2

I wanted to create the smoothest sounding electric guitar in this model, with some acoustic qualities. I decided to use a 2" thick mahogany body with quilted maple top, bored out with as many 1" holes as I could fit without touching one another in the mahogany. The neck is one-piece mahogany. I use mahogany for these models because the wood is so beautiful sounding, warm, smooth, not to mention the fact that it is very stable, and a pleasure to work (it shapes and sands easily). The strings go through the body, and I use a pair of my own custom blended humbuckers on this model. The bridge is usually made out of the same material as the fingerboard (rosewood, pau ferro, or ebony (usually Macassar ebony) with a custom compensated thick bone saddle. Controls include master volume, blend, passive tone for the magnetic pickups, treble cut/boost and bass cut/boost for the under saddle piezo, and a mono/stereo switch.

Baritone

John Sebastian, of "Lovin' Spoonful", Welcome Back Cotter" fame is a good friend and neighbor of mine. John has always been a lover of guitars, and of being around shops that produce them. He worked in Tom Vinci's shop when Tom built

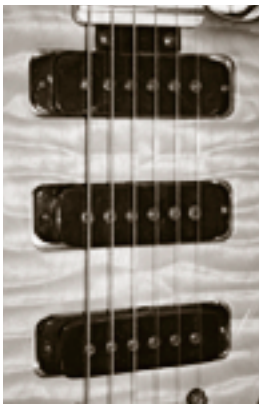
-continued-

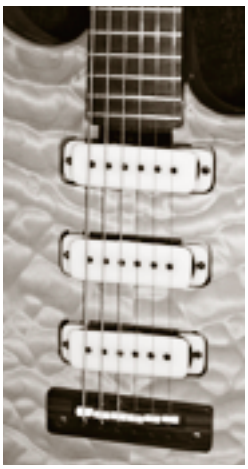
guitars. When Veillette-Citron moved to Kingston, NY which is very close to Woodstock, John started to come around. He asked us to build him a Baritone. He had been playing Fender 6-string basses tuned down a fifth and strung with strings gauged from .016 to .080. The sound was amazing and enchanting. He used to capo at the second fret or so to make the reach a little bit more manageable. We built him a 28 3/4" scale Baritone that worked very well for him. Ever since I started building again, I hoped that John would ask me to build him a Baritone. I had a strong feeling that the Baritone would be amazing built the way I build my 2 1/2" thick, mostly hollow instruments. I let him play a variety of my guitars with different degrees of hollowness, and he agreed with me. When I finished he said it was the best sounding Baritone ever. The body is mahogany, the top spruce, neck mahogany, fingerboard rosewood, bridge rosewood with a custom compensated thick bone saddle. John doesn't use piezo, so his Baritone is totally passive with two humbuckers, a three-position pickup selector, master volume and master tone. My Baritone model features the same electronics as the CG2.

TQR: How do you approach wiring options and selecting specific pickups specifically?

I seek to give the player flexibility. On my acoustic/electric models I feel it is important to give full control to the magnetic and piezo circuits separately and together. On the acoustic/electric guitars, the controls include master volume, blend between the piezo and the magnetic pickups, passive tone for the magnetic pickup(s), treble & bass boost/cut for the piezo circuit, and mono/stereo switch that allows the use of a mono cable in mono position, and a stereo cable in the stereo position allowing you to route the magnetic circuit to a guitar amp, and the piezo circuit to the house system, an acoustic amp, etc. On the AEG model there is also a sweepable mid cut/boost for the piezo.

I started winding pickups in 1974. I tried winding coils with different gauges of wire, different number of turns, different magnets (alnico and ceramic). One of the things I noticed was that a lot of the early pickups that other manufacturers were making sounded great, but many players were looking for more output. Pickup makers started using thinner gauges of wire and putting more turns on. This yielded greater resistance, higher output, and more midrange. At Veillette-Citron I was building pickups, and then I got the idea to build what we called a *staged* pickup. The first staged pickups were 3-stage (taps in both coils in two points. Later they were 2-stage. It was a humbucker with taps on both coils at the same number of turns. For example, each coil might have been wound to 5.5Kohms with taps at 3.5Kohms. A switch would be used to connect the coils at the different points, producing a single humbucker with resistance of 7K ohms and 11K ohms – two very different sounding pickups, and both dead quiet. I began to experiment with some pickups using heavier wire for the first stage and thinner wire on top for the second stage. The sound of the combination was wonderful, and I have been using a combination of wire gauges on my guitar and bass pickups currently. I call them *custom blended*. I haven't built any staged pickups since Veillette-Citron. All pickups are voiced for their position on the instrument (neck, middle and bridge pickups are different). I've done quite a bit of experimenting on pickups for bass and guitar. Currently I'm using Alnico magnets on the guitar pickups (humbuckers and single coils), and both ceramic and Alnico magnets for the humbucking bass pickups. I strive for clarity and presence in all my pickup designs.





TQR: How many instruments have you built, and how have they evolved or been improved/changed since their initial introduction?

At Veillette-Citron we built between 400-500 instruments (basses and guitars). At Citron, I have built fewer than 100 instruments. My AE series basses have evolved the most, as I have described.

TQR: Let's review the options that are available when you custom build a guitar (fingerboard radius, scale length, neck shapes, finishes, fret wire, nut material, wood types, etc).

When I build a custom instrument normal options include fingerboard material (maple, rosewood, pau ferro, ebony), tops

-continued-

(spruce, curly maple, quilted maple, spalted maple, maple burl, Macassar ebony, rosewood, wenge). I can build whatever fingerboard radius a customer wants and scale length. My finishes include gloss polyester, hand-rubbed stains and bursts, lacquers including nitro-cellulose, polymerized tung oil, and wiping varnish. Custom neck finishes are possible as well as fret wire and nut materials. I usually use bone nuts, except for trem guitars where I use graphite. I have even altered my interior cavities to be even more hollow, as in the last basses I built for Steve Swallow.

TQR: What's ahead?

I just got an order for bass number four from Steve Swallow. He wants more resonance, and it's going to be an AE5 with a thicker body than the current 2 1/2." It will be 3" thick like my early versions. The top will be 3/16" thick spruce, and probably little or no bracing. It will have the latest bridge I built for him with 6 EMG piezos, three adjustable buffer circuits, a custom Demeter preamp, and an intonation adjustable rosewood bridge with separate bone saddles. I also just built an AEG3 for myself – thicker, (2 1/2"), like the AEG, and as hollow as the AEG. It sounds wonderful.TQ

www.citron-guitars.com, 845-679-7138

REVIEW Citron CF-1

Once you step beyond the classic forms and designs created by Gibson, Gretsch and Fender, it's gut check time in the guitar market. Are you comfortable enough in your own skin to strut your stuff with a non-traditional guitar? Are there Jacksons, Mosrites and Parkers in your closet? Are you a PRS fanatic, or do you own any of the custom built PRS-inspired axes that seem to have become the default look for small builders of solidbody electrics? Respected builders such as Tom Anderson and John Suhr offer unique visuals that remain within the boundaries of classic solidbody design, but it has become increasingly difficult for custom builders to develop their own visual style without losing the traditionalists among us. As a small, custom builder, Harvey Citron is not concerned in the least with market share or traditional convention – he simply prefers to challenge the status quo with his own vision and build the guitars and basses that he wants to build.

We asked Harvey to send us our personal favorite among his solidbody 6-strings – the CF-1. We have played a number of Citrons over the past several years and they are all beautifully built with exceptional skill and uncommon design details, but the Firebird-inspired CF-1 has always beckoned us from across the aisle at the annual winter NAMM show.

The CF-1 takes the challenging geometry of the original Firebird and transforms it into a much more approachable and pleasing guitar to play. The gorgeously figured 1-piece Korina string-through body with flamed maple top and 1-piece bolt-on mahogany neck are light in weight and unlike the dangerously top-heavy Firebird, perfectly balanced at a total weight of just 6.7 pounds. The neck carve is a uniform 5/8 inch deep with a full, rounded shape, and we love the way the thin finish of the CF-1 allows the mahogany grain to be felt in hand. Jumbo fret wire also gives the CF-1 a very solid, precise feel for chords, soloing and string bending, if that's your bent… The 25.5" scale creates a light, easy string tension and feel along the entire length of the rosewood fingerboard that allows you to really relax and enjoy playing this guitar with no fight whatsoever.

The Citron "custom-blended humbuckers" are very cool – less woofy and muffled in the neck than traditional hummers, clear, bright and transparent in the bridge, with an enhanced overall clarity in both pickups that can't be had from normal humbuckers. The Citrons are almost closer to a P90, but noiseless, of course, and lacking the last 10% of the gritty drive that pummels the front end of an amp with traditional

-continued-

P90's. The CF-1 is exceptionally versatile with it's excellent range of clean tones and the spartan, single Volume/Tone switch and 3-way toggle.

Our review model included gold-plated Tele-style bridge plate, saddles and tuners. If you don't care for gold, just tell Harvey you want nickel or chrome. Variations on finish color, neck carve, fret wire, figured or plain maple top (or solid Korina) are also available. With its Strat-style belly cut and perfect weight and balance, the CF-1 is one of the most comfortable guitars we have ever played, its unique sound is rich with character and utterly void of the sterile tones that can plague other custom guitars and pickups, and it is a real head turner. If you (or your bass player) are ready to step up and outside of the traditional vintage school of design, we urge you to call Harvey Citron to design your next custom guitar, baritone or bass. In addition to being a genuinely warm and solid human being, he builds exceptional, one-of-a-kind instruments. TQ

Goodsell Amplifiers

Richard Goodsell is one of the top Hammond organ technicians and restoration experts in the country, and his thorough appreciation for the inner workings of vintage Hammond organs has recently spilled over into guitar amplifiers. He makes a damn fine hand built amp at an affordable price, with players like Vince Gill, Sean Costello and Atlanta producer Brendan O'Brien (Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Korn, Stone Temple Pilots, the Black Crowes) counted among his customers, so naturally, we knew you'd want to meet him…

TQR: When and how were you first exposed to electronics and guitar amplifiers specifically?

I had always been electrically clever as a kid with batteries and light bulbs and such, and when I was 13 or 14 I started tearing up record players and stereos to see what made them work. I remember my high school AV department retiring a bunch of tube gear to make way for the "new and improved" solid-state stuff and one of the pieces I salvaged from the trash was a working Dynaco 70 power amp. It would turn up in projects several times in the years that followed. About the same time, I got my first guitar amp although I only owned an acoustic guitar at the time – it was a '68 Bandmaster head with purple velvet grill cloth and a green pilot light jewel, but I never used it for guitar. I cobbled together some kind of preamp for a turntable and used an Altec A7 type cabinet for the speaker, and it was only used outdoors for parties where we would play Peter Frampton until the cops came. It was *loud*. That was 1975 and I was 16.

Many years later after college, rehab, and more college, I had a suit-job a at a TV station that allowed me to afford to indulge in toy purchases that included a '64 ES-330 with nickel P90's and a Bigsby, a master-volume silverface Twin, and a couple of Hammond B3's with a Leslie 145. I didn't really know what to do with the Hammonds… I knew that every record I ever loved had B3 on it, and I knew the Leslie was an essential part of the formula, plus, they were just plain damn cool. When I eventually started a basement band there were six or seven of us who wanted to play guitar, plus a drummer. Somebody switched to bass, and I learned some chords on the organ. What I lacked in chops I made up for in tone, and being able to spin the Leslie didn't hurt either.

That was the late '80s, and while more accomplished musicians were buying the latest Yamaha DX-whatever, I began snapping up every Rhodes and Wurlitzer piano available, along with Hohner Clavinets, Moog synthesizers, and still more Hammonds and Leslies. Back then all of this stuff was relatively cheap, as the retro craze was still a year or two away. Of course none of this was "retro" to me. As far as I knew, this was how music was made. It absolutely required the presence of wood and tubes and metal objects vibrating in magnetic fields. All of the music store owners in town would call me to come pick up this "junk" that they would buy back for five or ten times as much a few years later.

By late '93, I was getting a divorce and quitting the TV business, and when the dust cleared all I had left was a huge pile of bizarre musical assets. Chuck Leavell had already purchased one of my Wurlitzers when the word started to get out that I was the go-to guy for what was just beginning to be called "vintage" gear. R.E.M. was a huge early client as was Sheryl Crow. It was then that I realized I should continue to buy this stuff as I made sales. In a matter of months I was making weekly trips to Nashville, where there was an endless appetite for the "old school" gear at the time, as well as New York and the West Coast several times a year. You can't sell it if you can't fix it, so I eventually became somewhat of an expert in the area of weird analog, transistor, tube and electromechanical keyboards.

After about 10 years, I had amassed a huge client base across every musical genre and had sold, repaired, and/or custom-built literally hundreds of organs and electric pianos. By then I was becoming exhausted trying to keep up with all of the

-continued-