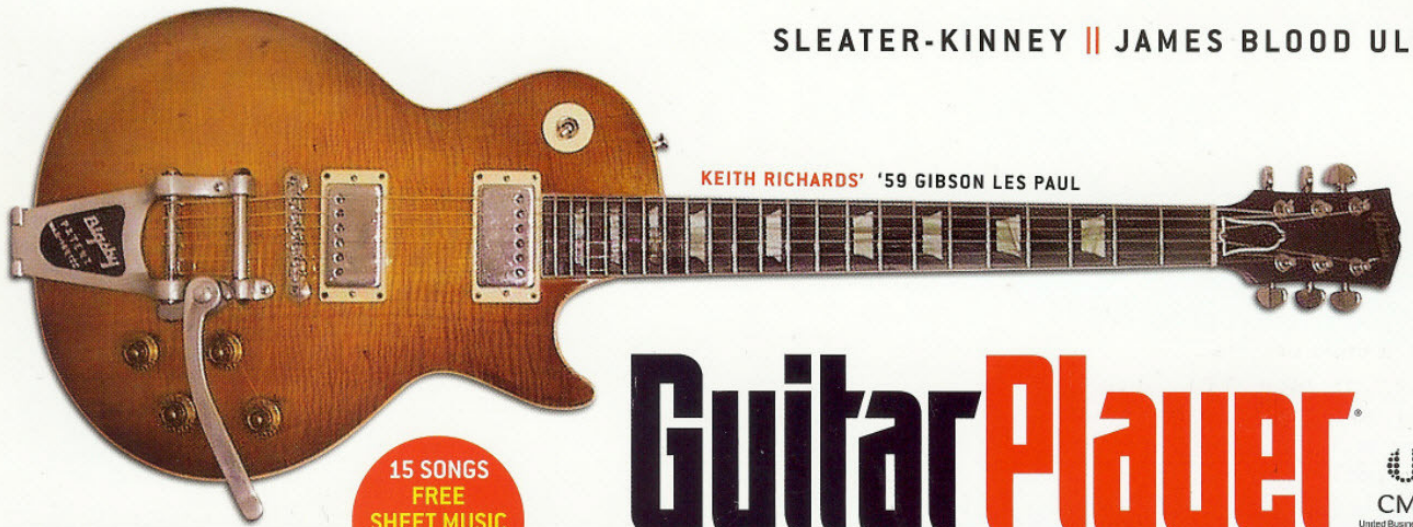


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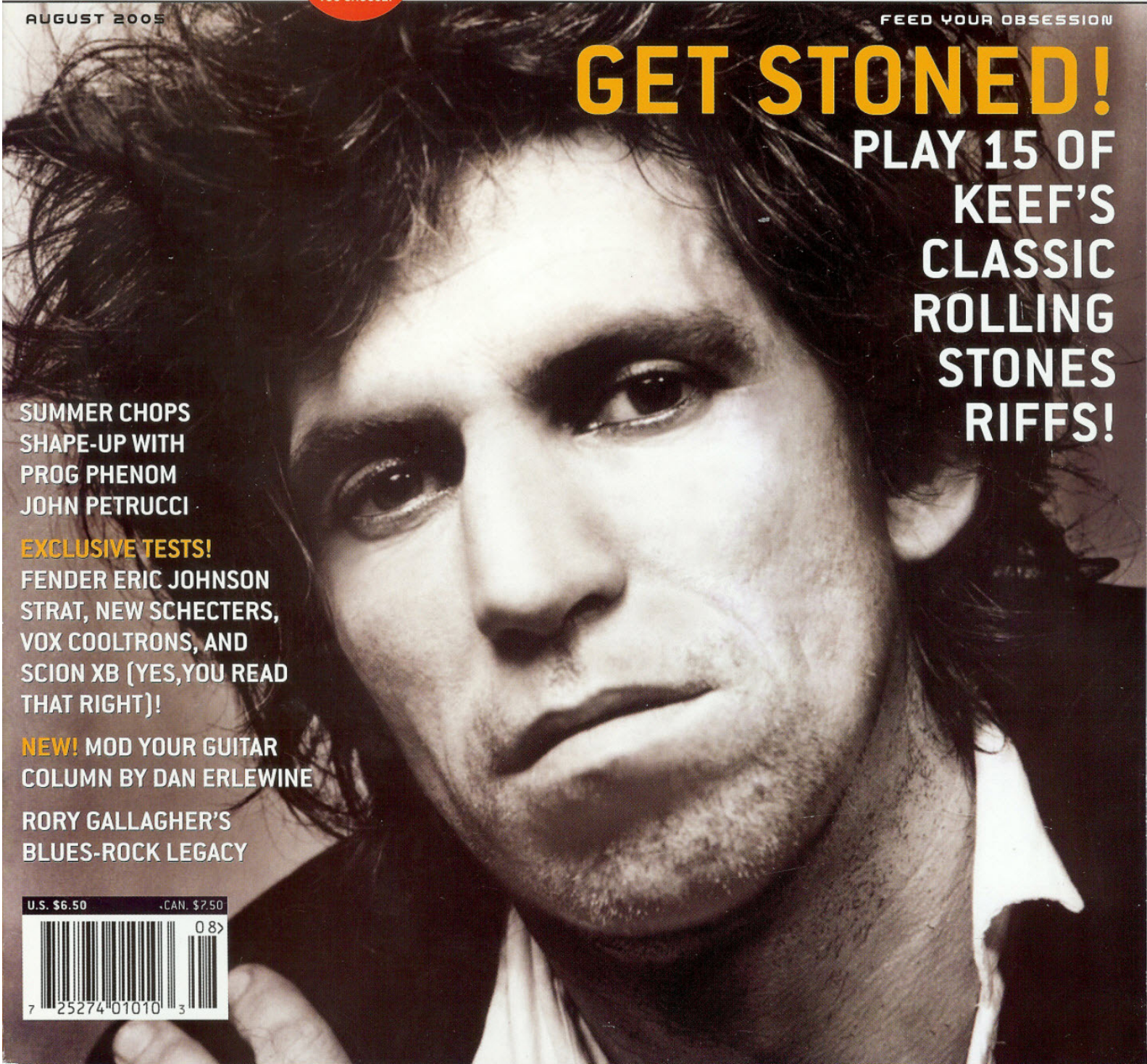
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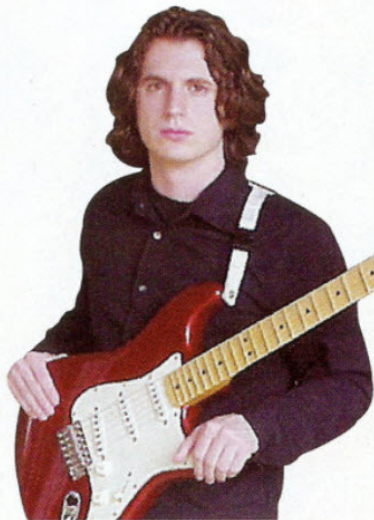


## MIKE VARNEY'S SPOTLIGHT

No matter how old you are, where you live, or what style of music you play, this column offers you the potential to be recognized by your peers. If you're chosen for Spotlight, you'll receive an Ernie Ball t-shirt, customized EB picks with your name on them, and a box of the Slinky strings of your choice—as well as having your two best mp3s promoted online on EB Radio ([ernieball.com](http://ernieball.com)). To be considered for Mike Varney's Spotlight, please send a CD of your music, your email address, and your bio to: Spotlight c/o Mike Varney, Box P, Novato, CA, 94945. Note: You will not be contacted unless you are selected.

EB RADIO

GUITAR STRINGS



**GUITARIST:** Justin Tolan

**AGE:** 18

**STYLE:** Neo-classical metal

**INFLUENCES:** Yngwie Malmsteen, Jason Becker, Danny Elfman, George Bellas

**MAIN GUITARS:** Fender Stratocaster

**LOCATION:** Cumming, GA

**BACKGROUND:** Tolan began playing acoustic guitar at the age of eight, started lessons with a local teacher at 12, and focused his study on the shred virtuosos of the neo-classical school after hearing Yngwie Malmsteen for the first time. Soon, he increased his practice regimen to up to eight hours on weekdays, and eight to 14 hours on weekends. Summer programs at the Berklee School of Music enhanced his skills—especially his study with faculty member and notable shredder Joe Stump.

Armed with a mature sense of musicality, and a full spectrum of shred-guitar chops, Tolan's playing reminds neo-classical fans of his Malmsteen and Becker influences—which is no small feat for any guitarist to accomplish, but nearly unheard of for someone Justin's age.

**CONTACT:** [jusstintolan@yahoo.com](mailto:jusstintolan@yahoo.com)



**GUITARIST:** Elliot Holden

**AGE:** 30

**STYLE:** Progressive rock, blues, neo-classical

**INFLUENCES:** Eric Johnson, Jeff Beck, Wayne Krantz, Jimi Hendrix

**MAIN GUITAR:** Fender Stratocaster

**LOCATION:** Augusta, GA

**BACKGROUND:** A guitarist since the age of 14, Holden had a musical epiphany upon seeing the movie *Crossroads* in 1988. "The guitar solo that [film star] Ralph Macchio played [which was actually performed by Steve Vai] changed my musical tastes forever," he explains. Hearing Eric Johnson was another ear opener, and Holden began to explore instrumental rock in greater depth.

A guitar teacher at Rock Bottom Music in Augusta, Holden saves the weekends for gigging with his band, the Elliot Holden Group. He has released two CDs independently—*We Be Delicious* (2002) and *Radiance* (2005)—selling them at gigs, [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com), and iTunes.

Holden is a very melodic soloist with great phrasing and technical prowess. With deep roots in Hendrix and Eric Johnson, he is one of the most promising new guitarists to submit a CD to Spotlight this year.

**CONTACT:** [eh@elliioholden.com](mailto:eh@elliioholden.com)



**GUITARIST:** Dave Woods

**AGE:** 47

**STYLE:** Instrumental progressive rock

**INFLUENCES:** Allan Holdsworth, Al Di Meola, Steve Morse, Mike Keneally

**MAIN GUITAR:** Peavey Predator with EMG SA pickups

**LOCATION:** Escondido, CA

**BACKGROUND:** Dave Woods began playing guitar 40 years ago, with an emphasis on sight reading, classical guitar, and fingerpicking. Woods refers to himself as a "musical recluse," as he has never played in a band, foregoing playing live in favor of composing and recording his own compositions. A prolific songwriter, Woods has written more than 150 songs. His current demo—a showcase for a collection of instrumental soundscapes he calls *Silent Rage*—proves his mettle as a guitarist with his strong vibrato and keen melodic flair. An impressive display of musicality, Woods' playing on *Silent Rage* is at times reminiscent of such greats as Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, David Gilmour, and Joe Satriani.

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Mike Varney is a San Francisco Bay Area record producer and owner of Shrapnel, Blues Bureau, and Tone Center Records.