

I don't let anything leave here that doesn't sound good with a pedal. You know, there are twenty other great sounding amps – all I can say is that I was blessed with my ears and perhaps what I want to hear is what you want to hear. It's the interpretation of tone, and I guess I can relate to a certain number of people. Hopefully that's it. **TQ**

The Fargen 45 Watt Plexi

Once upon a time the only way you could acquire a 45 watt Plexi amp was to throw down some major cash. Not anymore. The Fargen 45 watt head happily changes the game if you are chasing true vintage Marshall 45 watt tone.

Granted, there aren't as many 45 watt heads being built today as there once were – a sign o' the times no doubt. Twenty watters are ruling the marketplace these days, and that's fine... unless you need headroom at stage volumes. You can mic a low powered amp on 4 and get a clean tone out of it, but it's



not the same sound you'll get from a more powerful amp. Jeff Beck proved that you could use a 15 watt amp to great effect when he toured with a 15 watt Fender Pro Junior toting the note, yet we can't envision someone like Dickey Betts touring with anything less than a Marshall 100 watt head. Different strokes... And Dickey does have a righteous tone indeed...

The Fargen 45 watt head is really more akin to a JTM 45, as the labels indicate on the transformers. The Fargen is a completely custom built and overbuilt amp featuring a pair of EL34s (or KT66's in our case), custom trannies and premium SoZo tone caps throughout. The workmanship is flawless to a fault, every solder joint and wiring layout a work of art. We understand that only nine of these amps were built, and their rarity only boosts their appeal. But that's not why you would score a Fargen... You would choose it for its faithful adherence to the design and build quality that put Marshall on the map, although we daresay the build and parts quality of the Fargen far exceeds a Marshall production amplifier. It just does. One look at this amp under the hood and you know you have acquired a true custom built amp with all the care and discriminating parts quality you might expect. As amplifiers go, the Fargen is a true work of art. Well done, Benjamin.

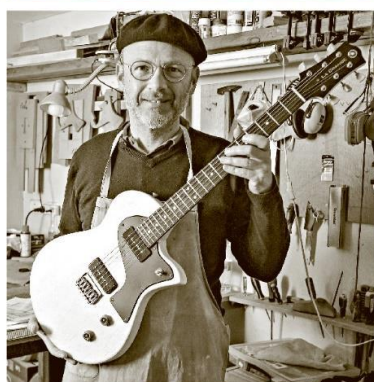


Tonally, well it just doesn't get any better. The tone of this amp is rich and pure, remaining more or less clean with an accommodating edge along the range of the volume control. Lows are stout and strong with no woofiness or indistinct bass tones, mids are ever-present and highly complementary to a good guitar, and the trebly highs are a dead giveaway that this amp was custom built. There isn't a strident or edgy tone in this amp – it's all smooth and completely musical tones that really compliment your best guitars. You don't have to work at getting a truly stellar tone out of the Fargen – just turn it on and you're there. The tone controls nicely manage EQ giving you the freedom to tweak EQ just right, and the High Treble control is the money knob on this amp, giving you a nicely overdriven tone that stops well short of creating a buzz bomb. If you want intense distortion from this amp you will have to resort to help from a pedal, but the "pedal tones" from this amp are glorious indeed. When you start with such a clean and toneful platform, a good overdrive pedal just sounds exquisitely fine through this amp. Honestly, it just doesn't get any better. All in all, the Fargen is a magnificent amp, exceedingly easy to dial in and the tones are simply unmatched in any production amplifier. In other words, you can't do any better, it's that good. Quest forth... **TQ**

exclusiveamps.com

Interview with Benjamin W.

La Grange Handmade Guitars



In this informative article you will learn how a motivated and truly inspired luthier found his guitar-building calling in Israel. Enjoy!

I grew up in a small village in the south of France and as a child I was building

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Grand Wheel

all kinds of things with wood. In the village, all the houses were furnished with traditional wooden furniture and I dreamed of one day becoming a cabinetmaker in the purest of tradition. But we left the village for Paris and I did not realize this dream and I finally became a lawyer.

As a teenager in Paris, I discovered rock music and grew up to the sounds of guitarists like Gary Moore, Billy Gibbons, Angus Young and others. I was twelve years old when I bought my first electric guitar and a second-hand Champ II Fender amp. This little amp remains my favorite amp that I use for the demos of my guitars. During all these years I never gave up these two passions, woodwork and music. After settling in Israel in the early 2000s, I had the feeling that I had to find a new profession that would allow me to realize myself, and all of a sudden I understood that lutherie was the answer to my quest – a profession that combines my two passions, wood-working and music. I was then lucky enough to meet with Master luthier Jacob Algrenati and to join his lutherie course in Tel-Aviv. The most important thing I have learned from him is what makes a handmade instrument so special beyond the quality of its materials – it is the soul that the builder breathes into the “body.”

TQR: What was your vision for the guitars you would eventually build in terms of design, construction, and the sound of your guitars?

My vision was to create instruments that combine tradition and originality to fit into the framework of classic instruments and to add my touch of creativity, both from the point of view of sound and design. As a guitarist, I know that an instrument can be a source of inspiration. A simple note can open a flow of creativity. My goal is to create instruments that have a real depth, something that makes the soul vibrate. I believe that simplicity is also part of this philosophy.

TQR: Did you have specific preferences regarding the wood species you would use?

The woods used have a primordial importance in the sound of the guitar, not only each wood but especially their combination. It's a bit like a good cuisine dish, ingredients are certainly important but what really makes the difference is the way

you combine them. For each of my models, I have chosen a different combination of wood that meets my expectations in terms of sound, weight and aesthetic. I meticulously choose each piece of wood for each guitar. In the same species of wood, you can find pieces with really different properties. It depends of course of the origin of the wood and from which part of the tree the wood comes. For example, the density of the wood usually varies considerably between the central parts and those close to the bark.

TQR: Did any vintage guitars or other guitars you had played inspire your vision for your guitars? If so how?

As a guitar player, old Fender guitars were my dream guitars. So, when I started building guitars I decided to use the Telecaster design as a platform to develop my building skills and I built seven Teles using different wood combinations, pickups configurations and parts. That's how I really started to understand how each element influences the sound of the guitar. I think that each guitar is a source of learning. The possibilities are endless. A few years later, I was eager to create an original guitar with a set neck and a short scale for the blues guitar player. I had just finished drawing the contours of this new model when a friend brought me an old Hohner guitar that obviously had several lives during which she had undergone all kinds of modifications. This guitar was equipped with P90s and really had something special. This old Hohner was the missing link that helped me finish the design of my new model. That's how “The Wheel” was born.

TQR: Now that you have some experience building your own guitars, how have your preferences evolved and changed from when you first started?

Definitely! As I mentioned in your last question, I first started building Fender scale guitars with bolt-on necks and with the time I evolved toward set neck guitars with short scales. I think this is very natural evolution for a guitar builder.

TQR: What are your favorite types of wood used and why?



For solid bodies, my first choice is White Limba. Combined to hard woods in the neck (like maple and ebony on The Wheel model), it works fantastic. On semi-hollowed bodies, I love the classic

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combination of mahogany with a maple top. Once again, each model comes with its own original wood combination.

TQR: What types of hardware (bridges and tailpieces) do you use and why did you choose them in particular?

On The Wheel and The Grand Wheel models (set-neck, short scale) I use made in USA ABR-1 vintage style bridge combined with an aluminum tailpiece and TonePros locking studs. I believe this is the best combination for this type of guitar. The Bigsby B5 also works great on these models.

On bolt-on Fender scale, I use different kinds of bridges from different manufacturers. If I need a tremolo Strat style bridge, I like the vintage 6 screw bridge that provides maximum



contact to the body. The Hipshot hardtail chrome bridge is my first choice for non-tremolo. Amazing bridge in all aspects, manufacturing quality, sustain, tuning and looks great.

TQR: What type of neck joint do you use and do you feel it makes a difference in the resonance and sustain of the guitar?

I use set-neck joints on The Wheel and Grand Wheel models and bolt-on necks on my long scale models. The type of neck joint does make a difference. But, I don't think it is a difference in terms of better or worse. I would say that the difference is mostly a question of stability. The set-neck joint offers the best stability and homogeneity. It offers a compact sound all over the fretboard. On the other side, the bolt-on joint offers instability which is not a bad thing. I think that this "instability" – that partly explains the "twang" – is the tone signature of Leo Fender instruments.

In terms of building (construction proper) and playability (access to higher frets), no doubts that set-neck joint makes more sense. But, if you build a Telecaster with a set-neck, in my opinion you are ruining the concept and the expectation of the customer.

TQR: How do you build the neck on your model "The Wheel"?

The construction method I developed on this model (same thing for The Grand Wheel) consists of using two quarter sawn rock maple blanks glued together with a purple heart stripe in the middle. I believe this is the best way to build this kind of neck. Besides the fact that it looks great, with this method there is no need to add wings for the head stock and the neck is solid as a rock.

TQR: Do you use rosewood primarily for your fingerboard?

Indeed. When I started building guitars, I mainly used three kinds of woods for my fingerboards, maple, rosewood and bubinga. With the new CITES regulations, it has become more difficult to use rosewood and bubinga, and I started looking for replacement woods. I have tried other species until I found Indian ebony. I love this wood! It has all of what I like, depth, brightness and a beautiful straight black grain. It is now my favorite wood for the fretboard.

TQR: How do you feel that weight affects the tone of the guitar?



I am not sure I know how to address this question.

The weight of the guitar results from the design (thickness for example) of the guitar and the density of the woods. If you compare two guitars with the same design and one is heavier, it means that the woods have a higher density. Density does affect the tone of the guitar. It provides extra sustain but less resonance.

TQR: What type of nut material do you prefer and why?

I use only unbleached bone nut. I think it is the only way to go when building handmade guitars with a vintage flavor.

TQR: Pickups are so important... What do you use and how much research have you done on pickups? What led you to choose the pickups you use?

When I started building guitars, I tried all kind of vintage style pickups from the most famous boutique builders, Lollar, Fralin, TV Jones and others. Afterwards, I looked for small builders with a state of mind close to mine, people with whom I would be able to develop a constructive relationship based on a mutual willingness to progress together. Someone you

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passion and a lot of patience.

TQR: What are your thoughts on scale length?

In terms of design, the scale length is crucial. This is the first thing you need to decide when designing a new guitar. It will determine the number and position of frets, the location of the bridge and pickups... I believe the scale determines the basic flavor of the guitar, to which word your instrument belongs. This is especially true when you build vintage style instruments.

TQR: What type of fret wire do you use?

I use Jescar fret wire. Medium-jumbo or jumbo frets are standard on all of my models.

TQR: Which type of tuners do you like?

I use Gotoh vintage Kluson style tuners on all of my models (6 inline for my long scale models and 3+3 on my short scale models). These tuners meet my main expectations; manufacturing quality, tuning stability, vintage look, and low weight. Gotoh now also make them with a locking system. They work great!

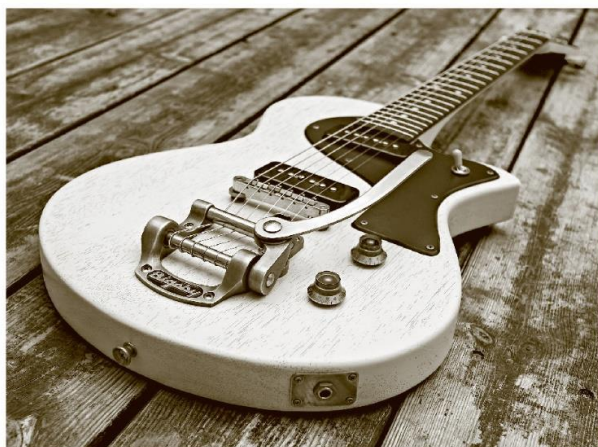
TQR: What's ahead for you? New models and new designs, or do you wish to stay with shapes and designs inspired by the past (nothing wrong with that)?

I am always working on new designs and ideas, but with my new model The Wheel and The Grand Wheel - a deluxe version of The Wheel, I feel I have succeeded in achieving my vision of creating an original instrument that combines tradition and creativity - an instrument with a true vintage attitude and able to produce a wide range of tones. I dream of making this model a new "classic" in the world of boutique guitars. This is my main focus now. Thanks! **TQ**

Benjamin Wasservogel
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An Exquisitely Built Guitar Comes To Us

From An Unlikely Location



You already know how much we love simply made, well-built mahogany and Korina guitars... Well, we recently received a handmade electric guitar from a most unlikely source – luthier Benjamin Wasservogel, a Frenchman now living in Israel with his Israeli wife. We found Benjamin while searching for unknown (to us anyway) luthiers, and Benjamin popped up on an internet search for 'custom builders'. Sometimes, just poking around with a phrase or two gets results that we would never have achieved without the web. We viewed Benjamin's guitars online and promptly sent him an email asking if it would be possible for us to receive a guitar for review. He quickly responded with an enthusiastic YES! And in a few days his guitar arrived ready to rock & roll. And rock & roll it does.

"The Wheel" is made from a generous slab of Korina with a nicely rounded maple neck, premium ebony fingerboard, beautifully dressed medium-jumbo frets and Gibson-style vintage Kluson tuners. The neck on this guitar is one of its strongest selling points, largely due to the exceptionally comfortable neck carve and the outstanding fret dressing and polish. We have never received a guitar for review with better fret work. The guitar weighs 7.75 pounds, light enough to play comfortably all night but with the intense sustain and rich harmonic overtones you would expect from a Korina body. In terms of resonance and response to pick attack The Wheel gets our highest rating. It also holds pitch exceptionally well with the Bigsby, even with plenty of vibrato and dips with the Bigsby, string bending, and aggressive chord work. We also love the generous and artful belly carve on the back of the guitar which is executed perfectly.

The pickups are exceptional in every way – lush, strong, clear and loaded with essential harmonic overtones. The Wheel is beautifully detailed played clean, and dimed through a great amp (in this case our Ampeg GU12) the overdriven, distorted

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tones are equally clear with monumental sustain and a very “clean” distortion quality that allows the individual strings to sing like a very gutsy choir. It is rare to find a guitar with the clarity and character of The Wheel, and it fully rivals our vaunted Historic Les Paul Junior in terms of tone, volume, sustain, clarity, and thick, rich tonality. The only difference is that you have two pickups and two distinct sounds to work with. The bass tones are heavy and imposing, mids are all present and accounted for and the treble tones are sweet and strong, never too sharp or biting. The neck pickup maintains enough treble presence to be eminently useful, and the bridge is sweeter than it is sharp. You could literally play a jazz gig with this guitar, or any other type of music, including your best tribute to Leslie West. The Wheel a true chameleon, to say the least.

We have no doubt that this is the first guitar you will have ever considered or admired that was made in Israel – the new home to custom made and very thoughtfully built electric guitars. Additional models can be found on the La Grange website. If you have an appetite for a stellar Korina guitar with exceptional playability, touch and tone, The Wheel could be right in your wheel house. Shipping from Israel is not that onerous and Benjamin stands ready to craft a true keeper guitar for you. Quest forth... **TQ**

lagrange.guitars

How the ...

Louis Electric Tornado Really Rocks

Lou Rosano has been custom building truly great amplifiers for a couple of decades, and after working with greats such as Hubert Sumlin, Lou has truly found his niche in the world of custom built amplifiers. Enjoy...

We have been friends with Lou Rosano, founder of Louis Electric amps for years, and we have enjoyed our relationship



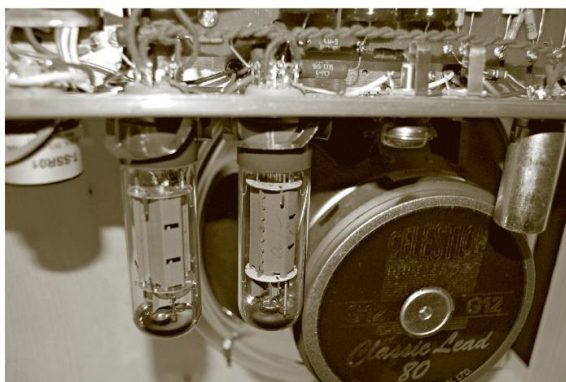
with Lou very much. He got us into the Clapton show at Madison Square Garden during the Cream

reunion tour with Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker, and he enjoyed a long relationship with blues great Hubert Sumlin, who faithfully played through Lou's amps. We also met and hung out with Hubert during a blues show that was held in a cow pasture in Georgia, and it was an excellent hang indeed. Hubert was a kind and gentle man, and a truly great blues guitarist with a resume that spoke for itself. God bless him.

Lou's Tornado amp is an incredibly toneful rock and blues machine, simply designed with all the features you need to get your yah yah's out. You get two volume controls and a single tone control in a fixed bias AB1 circuit that puts out a strong 30 watts with a handy cathode cap switch that boosts the tone of the amp with a larger bloom and heavier tone – very handy for those times when you want a little more oomph in your tone.

The single tone control does everything you need to precisely shape the sound of the amp and the Celestion G12 Classic Lead 80 speaker is more than up to the task of handling the power of the amp. This speaker has a clean tone that is quite addictive, very rich and draped in harmonics that give the amp a rich texture and feel. We wouldn't be inclined to change this speaker one bit.

The dual EL34, 5AR4 circuit is powerful and richly imbued with harmonic overtones and depth, and the rectifier gives the amp a palpable depth of field that gives the guitarist some room to work with the feel and response of the amp. You can do a lot of interesting things by varying pick attack with the



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