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Modern Guitars Magazine - John Page

News and information about electric and acoustic guitars

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January 20, 2005, 2:15 AM (January 20, 2005)

So, as I said in my last entry, I've been working on this interview with one of the editors from Strat Collector News, for the past year. I would have to say it's the most in-depth interview I've ever done. He asked me questions about where I grew up, what kind of town it was, where I went to school, when I got into music, art, everything... man, it's been really intense.

But, I must admit, it's been really cool trying to remember all the stuff that's happened over the years.

I'm in the middle of working on the Custom Shop years of the interview. I think what's tying me up the most is just the fact that so much happened... there are so many cool stories that I don't know where to start sometimes. There were also a lot of shitty things that happened as well, and I'm not sure how much I want to go into that. Plus, my memory is just that... my memory. Other people may remember things differently than I do. But hey, I guess I'll just see how it all turns out.

Meanwhile, I thought I would give you a taste of how it starts. Keep in mind, these are my notes and not the final text from the finished upcoming article.

Here goes...

After my eleven month hiatus, working on my music, I called Dan Smith in December of 1986 to tell him I was going to get back in the guitar industry and asked him if they had any openings at Fender. He said that I could have my choice, get back into guitar R&D or get in on the ground floor of the Custom Shop. I really didn't have any desire to get back into R&D (I didn't get along very well with the guy in charge), but I liked the idea of the Custom Shop. Back when I was in the Model Shop, we made custom guitars for artists all the time... Fender just didn't advertise it.

In fact, John Cermanero (Rodgers drum designer), Steve Boulanger and Scott Zimmerman (Model Makers in R&D), and myself, put together a proposal for us to start a Custom Shop as outside vendors, back in 1984-1985. The proposal was rejected. Anyway, it was a project that we had been talking about for years, but it just didn't seem that the timing was right... until now. Dan told me that they had been talking to Texas-based guitar builder, Michael Stevens, and that he had agreed to come onboard so I could work with him if I wanted. It sounded good so I took the job.

At the time, Bill Schultz's vision of the Custom Shop he wanted was a couple of guys, "out in the back forty", making a few really cool guitars a year. It would help raise the quality perception of Fender product. He wanted us to build a showplace... so we did. We didn't have a shop for the first few months of 1987, so Mike and I worked out of his house in Corona. We worked primarily on our walnut and ebony benches.

Bill said he wanted a showplace, so we took him at his word. The walnut was actually left over from the Walnut Collector Series of guitars... so it finally went to something good. After a few months, we finally got into our new area of the factory in Corona. It was a 850 square foot niche... plenty of room for two builders.

Unfortunately, the original idea of what the Custom Shop should be would change very quickly.

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I'm also putting together some old photos... check this one out. This is me after Pamelina just gave me my Custom Shop logo tattoo at one of the CS parties I used to have for the guys every year. This is probably '91-'92ish.



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Oh yeah, one more thing. In one of the comments to my first journal entry, someone asked if I was building guitars now.

I haven't had the desire to build any guitars since I left Fender. That doesn't mean that I won't again in the future, but not right now. I don't want to be one of those guys that build a Strat or Tele and put their name on it.

No offense to those who do, but it's not for me. I spent my whole guitar career designing new things. I've designed quite a few innovations since I left Fender, and one of these days they just might all come together to form a new guitar. As soon as I think I can put a new, worthwhile product out there... I will. But for now, I'm having a kick-ass time creating my art. As long as I'm creating, I'm a happy guy.

Until the next entry...

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Comments

john thx for shareing. tuff question-what custom shop guitar was ur favorite?

Posted by: L1ve from S America on January 21, 2005 03:42 PM

Hats off to you JOhn Page!

Posted by: stratomatic on January 21, 2005 06:42 PM

JOhN,
hONEst, I aM Not STAIkiNg U. i jUsT IOOK up sOMETIMes and tHerE u ARe.
thEn, TheRe i am ReaDIng, ANd i sEE CERM's Name!

wait...maybe u guys are haunting me.....
so I'm anxious to see the interview. should be cool.
love ya,
miss ya....i need to see the trees up there soon...i live in a frickin desert...

Posted by: wobbie on January 24, 2005 03:36 AM

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