

CBG REVIEW

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark shirt with white vertical stripes, is playing a light-colored electric guitar. He is looking down at the guitar with a focused expression. The background is dark.

January 2022

R.B. STONE

ALL DAY, EVERY DAY!

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Making music...

Welcome to the January 2022 edition of CBG Review. Since starting out in 2017, CBGR has been exploring the whys and wherefores of making music from the perspective of both builders of home-made instruments and the artists who play them. Besides providing a sense of purpose and accomplishment, sharing and connecting with people are also good reasons for making music. The bottom line is that it simply helps people feel alive and happy – what more could we aim for in 2022!

Our first guest this year is R.B. Stone who has spent 40 years touring across 33 counties and has produced 18 albums, including a cigar box guitar album with Ben Rice in 2020. According to R.B., he just enjoys people and feels right where he belongs when he's getting a smile or an emotion out of them. He finds the sound CBGs make is haunting and powerful. Fun to play and eye-catching, he says he can talk about them "all day, every day!"

Boxstock is the longest-running cigar box guitar festival in the UK. It was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic, but fans were lucky enough to meet up at Boxstock 2021 last October. Paul Aitkinson tells us about the performing artists, traders, workshops and more. Sad news for Hollowbelly fans was that Boxstock 2021 would be his last-ever concert. Paul says "the bar is set high" for next year, but that he still can't wait!

Over the years, Steve Davis has performed in Europe, South Africa, the USA and the Caribbean. Trained in classical guitar, he

is a multi-instrumentalist who also builds guitars and loves the blues. So it's really not surprising that "Dogleg Steve" became hooked on cigar box guitars. He has four albums out, one of which is a CBG album called "Cigar Box Pickin'" and he'll be first to tell you how important it is to keep learning throughout your musical life.

Nanda Moura is a Brazilian musician singing and playing early blues, with a new album called "Quarentena" released last year. Coming from a musical family, she could already play guitar when she was nine years old. Passionate about the blues, Nanda says cigar box guitars have given her another vision of how to make music. Fascinated by their minimalism, she nevertheless says she still has a lot to learn about CBGs!

The cigar box guitar portrayed on the cover of the "Quarentena" album was built by Brazil's Guz Ferreiro of GuzGuitarsCo who built his first CBG in 2009 and ten years later started his company with products designed to cater to musicians of all ages and levels – at home, busking or on stage. Guz believes there is great potential for assimilating his "Cigarras" and CBG accessories into the Brazilian music scene.

As always – read, enjoy, and be inspired!

Best regards
Huey Ross

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RIB STONE

All day, every day!

Interview R.B. Stone, Nashville, TN, USA

“Without a bit of background, the first listen to R.B. Stone’s Lonesome Traveler’s Blues rings with the authenticity of a bluesman who has been there and done that. Nothing is forced or contrived. This guy has been down all sorts of gravel roads, often face-first. Turns out this bluesman has a whole lifetime of Americana and country music in his background. He’s got a background as colorful as any mountainside spring day and songs that flow as strong as runoff of winter’s snow.”

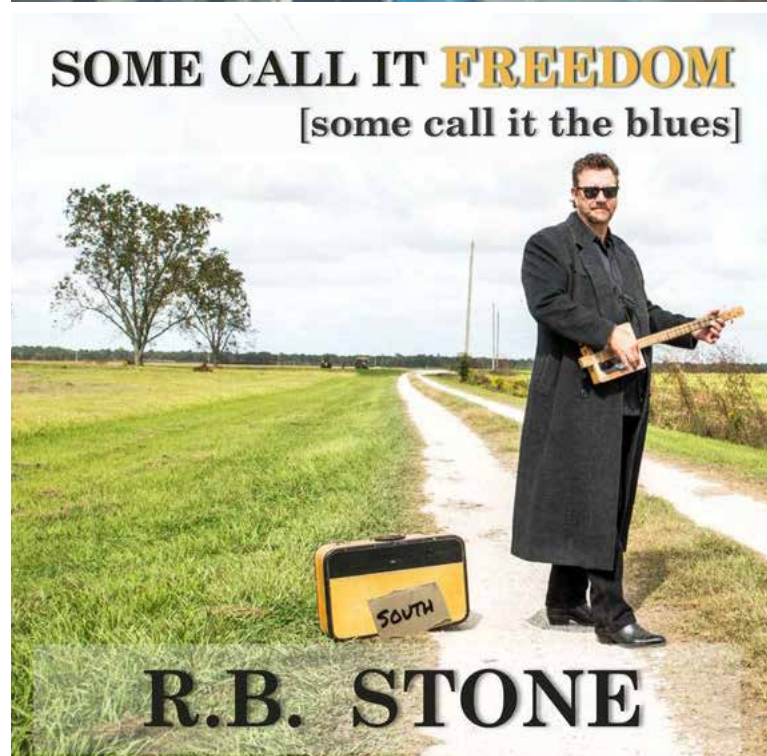
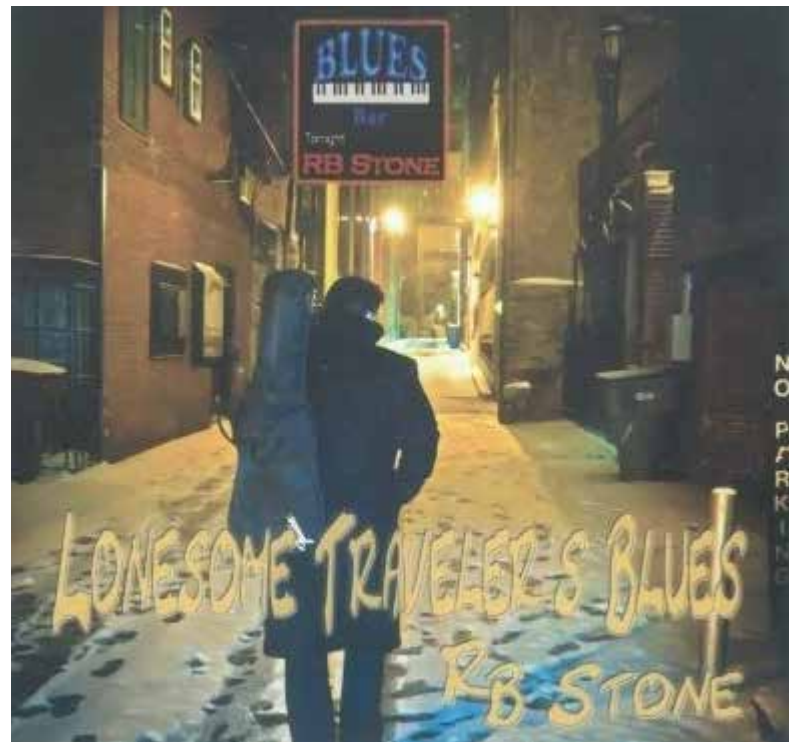
– Michael Kinsman, Blues Revue

CBGR: R.B., you started playing blues and boogie on the piano when you were 12?

R.B. Stone: Yes, my mother showed me some chords on the piano and I guess I had it in my blood, Bill Withers “Lean On Me” was the first song I learned.

Other kids go to college, but after high school you joined the railroad and traveled around in a rail gang for two years?

It was a 90-man rail gang, four days a week until I had to stop because I hurt my back. It was an experience for sure – I had a gun pointed at me the second week by a co-worker regarding a woman. I guess it was a test and I guess I passed because I’m still alive. We became friends later – dysfunction/crazy has its own set of rules.



A couple years later, you had your own business, a house, two cars, two trucks and two motor cycles – and then sold most of it?

It wasn't my business. I was manager of a plumbing electric and heating store selling things like kitchen cabinets, toilets, etc. After a couple years I became miserable where I lived regardless of all I had accumulated. I had been to Colorado and wanted to go back. I figured I could be miserable in a prettier place, haha!

So you became one of those singing cowboys that the US is famous for?

I guess so, after meeting an old Texas cowboy who worked out of a barn on an Indian reservation in Ignacio. I moved into the barn and he taught me how to train horses. By night I taught myself to play guitar, and after six months the local outfitters hired me to pack people into the mountains and entertain them.

But not your average singing cowboy – you've been influenced by a lot of different types of blues and country music?

Yes, everything from Motown to rock, country, blue grass and blues!

Who did you listen to?

I was listening to the radio hits of the day, rock, country, southern rock, bluegrass – anything that sounded good with a hook or a heartfelt message that inspired me.

Once you said you live by the “three Ms”?

Yes, that's right. Muddy Waters (representing all blues men and women), Merle Haggard and Marshall Tucker (I was definitely a disciple of those). I got to meet Merle once on his bus and present him with an award; he was just as nice as can be and I opened many shows for The Marshall Tucker Band. They even recorded a Gospel song of mine.

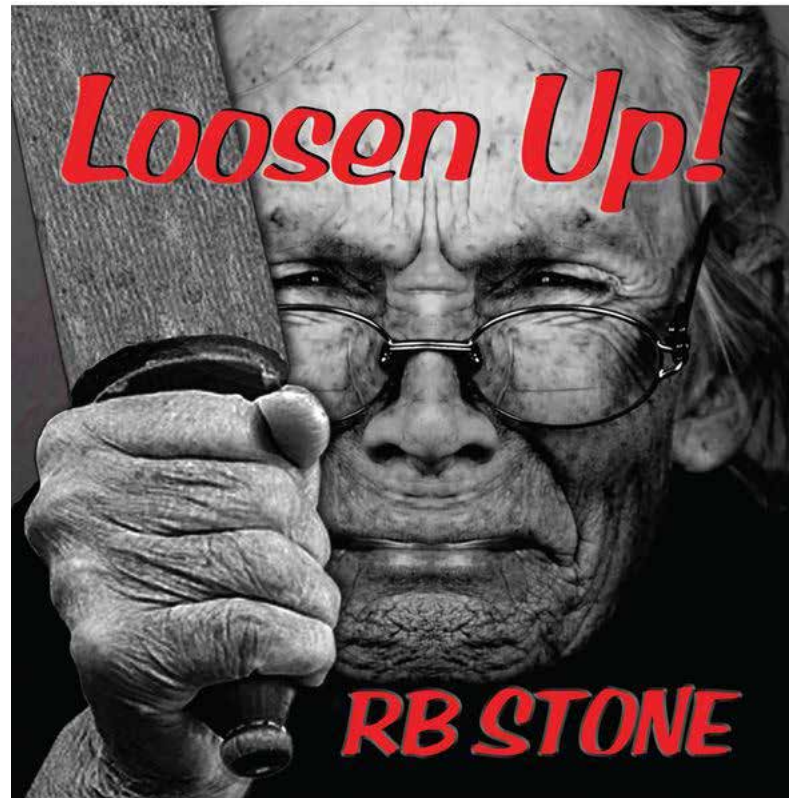


You've produced too many albums to list here – but mostly songs you've written?

Yes, 99%.

Where do all your ideas come from?

When I used to write for a magazine about songwriting I said there's "head songs" and "heart songs." The head songs are just clever ideas that you can put to music and the heart songs are when an emotion is so strong, it has to be written. Every now and again you get both. "God Heals You When You Cry" on the "Loosen Up" album was a heart song that I co-wrote it with Tom Hambridge (Buddy Guy's producer). I was in a funk and needed a way out. Bob Britt plays guitar on the studio recording.



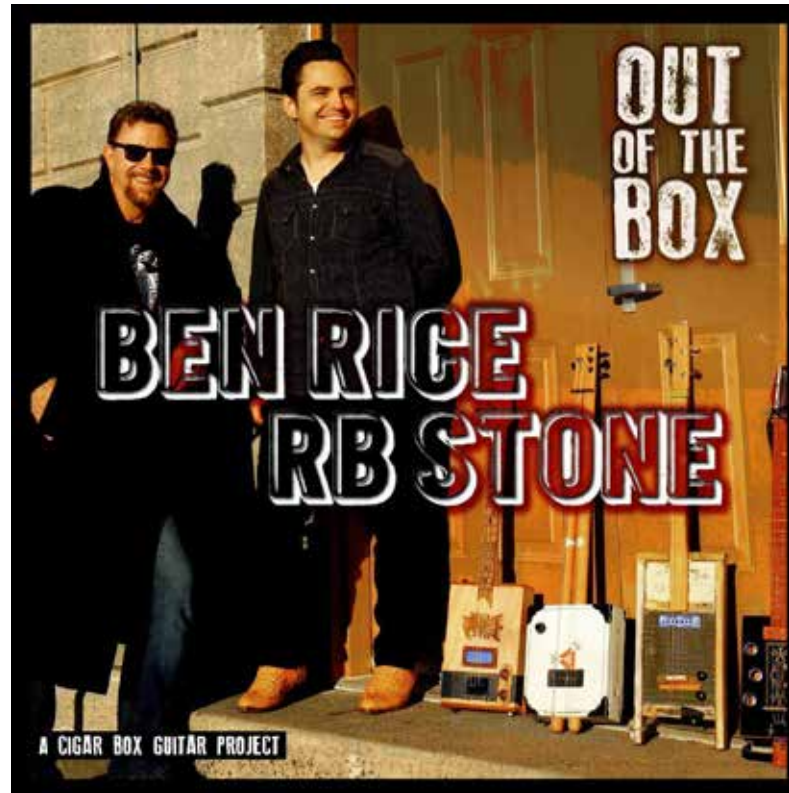
“There's head songs and heart songs”

One album was “Lonesome Traveler's Blues,” but you actually love to travel, right?

Yes I do. I'm at home on the road and I have a driving business when I'm not playing music.

Between Durango and present-day Nashville, there's been a bunch of national and international tours?

Too many to mention them all! I've played in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Central America and all over the USA. I've been to Japan probably 30 plus times.



How did you get into performing for the US military?

I was living in Southern California and I met a guy who was promoting shows for the Marshall Tucker Band and he was starting to do stuff over in Japan with the military. So he pulled me in – I went to 23 countries with the military and then maybe another ten or so where I had my regular shows.

“I play everything from laundromats to arenas”

What are a couple of good moments from your travels?

I could write a book and actually just started laying the groundwork on one with San Diego Blues Fest Promoter and writer Michael Kinsman. I’ve got a lot of stories we are sorting through.

Once in Japan I was playing to 4,000 people and I broke a string. I had to change it myself and I sang a *cappella* without accompaniment for four songs. I’m not sure why, but while doing it the crowd went nuts! Japanese people love live music and the arts. Another funny experience was when I played on the fourth of July in Japan and then flew to L.A. and played on the fourth of July again after gaining a day.



I've played some huge country festivals in front of ten to 20,000 people. One was Mirande in France, which is probably Europe's largest country and western festival. That was back in the nineties.

What about upfront more personal gigs?

I always say I play everything from "laundromats to arenas" because when I first started out we played the grand opening for a laundromat out in Colorado. Just recently, I played solo at the North Atlantic Blues Fest in Rockland, Maine in front of about 10,000 or more people. After that I drove to North Carolina and played at a bar to about 40 people. I just enjoy people – I think if you don't, you may not be in the right business. I feel like I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing when I'm entertaining folks. I feel validated

getting a smile or emotion out of them. I feel I'm doing God's work when I'm entertaining people.

What about when you were producing shows for the US military?

Those were great times; we did 100 shows in one year including myself and other acts in Japan and Korea. That was before email and internet, so it was a lot of work then.

You write a lot of songs while you're driving down highways – is that why you prefer driving to flying?

No, I like both. I became a pilot after entertaining the troops and airline crews in Japan. In fact, I wrote a lot of one album while flying to and from Japan.



How many new songs/albums can we expect from your latest “bank full of ideas”?

I have a couple albums already written and am performing the songs at my shows; they’re going over really well. I need to find the time to lay them down. I always have a lot of pieces of songs awaiting a turn to be written. It’s always about hiding from the regular world to be that writer and recording artist you need to be. Life can detour you sometimes.

And the question probably everybody asks is why the cigar box guitars?

I find the sound they make is haunting and powerful. They are fun to play and instantly grab people’s attention.

“I find the sound they make is haunting and powerful”

Are they better conversation starters than regular electric guitars?

All day, every day! I’ve got a nice Les Paul, but it’s the cigar box guitars that intrigue and mesmerize people. Most of the world still doesn’t know what they are and there’s never a show where someone doesn’t ask to hold one and check it out.



How many do you play now?

I play a “SwampEast” guitar made by Michael Cobb in Missouri, a four-string guitar that I use three strings on (I broke a string the first gig and never put it back on). I think less is better. I’ve got a little style I use rhythmically with chords on it. The guitar with two sticks or wooden dowels is called a “Lobo” and was made by a guy called Cap’n Ron Arnett. It has three electric guitar strings and a 68-gauge bass string that makes up a big part of its sound. Cap’n Ron’s down in Mexico now. Another one is a “Nickajack” plexiglass/wood guitar made by John Nickel & Co. in Alabama. I also have a license plate guitar made by a friend Alphonzo Perkins from Kansas who I sadly heard passed away recently. And I just received a “Lunatic” guitar from Steve Richard at Mainely CBG’s in Maine.

“...you can’t really tell the difference between cigar box guitars and say a six-string Telecaster or a Les Paul”

What made you and Ben Rice decide to come out with a cigar box guitar album (“Out of the Box”) in 2020?

Well I knew that Ben played them and I had met his dad who builds different kinds of instruments including washboard guitars. Originally the idea was to include a couple more friends, but for one reason or another it came down to Ben and I



in the end. The idea was to show just how versatile these things are. Some of the songs on there sound like your regular cigar box stuff, and the other songs you can't really tell the difference between cigar box guitars and say a six-string Telecaster or a Les Paul. That was the plan and I think we accomplished it. We got a lot of airplay from it and it was pretty much in the top ten of about every blues chart there is. It's still getting airplay today.

Which other albums did you play CBGs on?

I played the Lobo on the "Loosen Up" album ("Harley Heart" was one take as was most of the album) and the Nickajack in the "Some call it Freedom" album. You can see it on the cover. The three that I've used all have their own song as a kind of homage to their builders, so you've got the "Swamp East Boogie" and the "Lobo Jam" in the "Out of the Box" album.

And your plans for 2022?

I've got a few dates booked around the mid-west and Florida. I'd do a European tour when things open up. I want to do a Colorado tour in 2022; it's where I started and it's just magical out there. As mentioned, I will probably record an album or two as well. ☺ ■

<https://www.rbstone.com> | [facebook.com/rbstonemusic](https://www.facebook.com/rbstonemusic)
<https://www.rbstone.com>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/RBStoneMusic>

Builders mentioned:

SwampEast Guitar:

<https://www.facebook.com/Blackheart2499/>

CapnRons Lobos:

<https://www.facebook.com/capnranslobos>

Nickajack:

<https://www.facebook.com/ILoveNickajack>

Mainely CBG's:

<https://www.facebook.com/wickedMainecbg>



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Boxstock 2021

Paul Atkinson, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Photos: Margrit Mas and Greg Gdow

Boxstock is the longest-running (and as far as I know, the only) festival of Cigar Box Guitars in the UK, organized by that mover and shaker of the movement, the fervent firebrand that is Chickenbone John. The first took place in 2009, and with just a few years where no festival took place, 2021 was the eighth iteration of this steadily growing event.

This year, at very short notice, Boxstock was held in the Lighthouse Media Centre in Wolverhampton, just over the road from the Slade Rooms that hosted the previous two festivals and indeed was due to host this year's festival. Tickets for the event

had already been printed when the news emerged that the Slade Rooms were not going to reopen as a venue. Fortunately, after a somewhat frantic search, John managed to secure a new venue nearby.

The Lighthouse consists of well-appointed exhibition and gallery spaces, a large covered atrium, a bar, a café and a studio cinema, all housed in the refurbished Chubb Buildings, previously the factory and offices of the famous lock-manufacturing company. In many ways, this upcycled and creatively re-imagined venue is perfectly suited to the cigar box guitar.





This year's event began with an intimate Friday night concert in the covered atrium, opened by The PHilbilly One Man Band, playing a solid set of his "hillbilly blues trash skiffle" using home-made guitars, drums and a scratchy-sounding microphone. Headlining the Friday night was the Boxstock staple performer Hollowbelly. A surprise announcement by Chickenbone John just before he came on stage said that this would, in fact, be the last-ever concert by Hollowbelly, which added a certain piquancy to the performance. As ever, he was in full flow throughout, energetically thrashing out his "punk blues" along with his trademark facial expressions, stories, jokes and gesticulations. Visibly moved and drained as he finished his last song, Hollowbelly took his final bow to rapturous applause.

"Visibly moved and drained as he finished his last song, Hollowbelly took his final bow to rapturous applause"

The Saturday event itself also took place in the atrium. A number of trade stalls lined the cobbled and paved area, selling and displaying finished cigar box guitars, with makers including Chickenbone John, Dirt Pie, The English Guitar Company, Junksville Custom Guitars, Ray Jones and F.B.H. Guitars, and slides of all types by Diamond Bottlenecks and Celestial Slides. The small stage



PHilbilly One Man Band



Hollowbelly

from the previous night hosted short sets by players throughout the day on a drop in basis (including appearances by woodturner extraordinaire Andrew Hall and Banjo Ant who played at the first ever Boxstock Festival), and a “How to play a cigar box guitar” session for beginners run by Hollowbelly. So many took part in this session that the stalls were stripped of stock as people borrowed the guitars to try, which, I later found out, turned into more than one sale for the makers! Chickenbone John himself did a short set, and Kevin Brown performed a warm-up session prior to his evening slot.

“If there was ever an inspiration to get into making and performing with home-made instruments, this is it”

The daytime event drew to a close and the crowd went to find food, before returning to the studio cinema for the evening concert. This was opened by a screening of the documentary film “Three Chords and the Truth” (written by yours truly and directed by Virginia Heath) followed by a newcomer to Boxstock, Bobster, who performed a lively set of his own songs and a few rocked-up versions of blues classics (including one song that I instantly thought “I’m pinching that one!”). Veteran Kevin Brown then performed a full set from his extensive repertoire



Chickenbone John



Bobster



Kevin Brown



The Dusk Brothers

of sumptuous slide playing, mainly on a standard six-string, but nevertheless stylish and sublime. The evening was rounded off with a storming set by The Dusk Brothers. These guys have some real energy combined with great stage presence and fantastic original material, all performed on their home-made cigar box guitars, percussion and valve amps. If there was ever an inspiration to get into making and performing with home-made instruments, this is it.

As Chickenbone John took the stage to give his final thanks to everyone for taking part, he hinted he's already thinking about what to do for next year's event. The bar is set high, but personally, I can't wait. ■

<https://www.facebook.com/events/lighthouse-wolverhampton/boxstock-21-the-uk-cigar-box-guitar-festival/4192406540779195>

Artists mentioned:
 PHilbilly One Man Band
 Hollowbelly
 Andrew Hall
 Banjo Ant
 Chickenbone John
 Bobster
 Kevin Brown
 The Dusk Brothers

Builders mentioned:
 Chickenbone John
 Dirt Pie
 The English Guitar Company
 Junksville Custom Guitars
 Ray Jones and F.B.H. Guitars
 Diamond BottleNecks
 Celestial Slides



Dogleg Steve

Rock 'n rolling!

Interview Steve Davis a.k.a. Dogleg Steve, Torquay, United Kingdom

I was 20 when I went overseas for the first time. I went to Germany several times with different bands and loved it – I never made any money and we got ripped off all the time, but it was part of my stage-craft training. I've paid my dues. Music has taken me to quite a few countries over the years like Germany, Holland, France, South Africa, the USA, and the Caribbean.

CBGR: Steve, you started playing classical guitar when you were 12?

Steve Davis: Yes that's right, I plonked about with guitars at that age, but became serious about learning when I was 15 after hearing AC/DC. When I was learning guitar, two of my biggest influences were Richie Blackmore and John Williams.

And you later studied classical guitar at the London College of Music?

Yes, I had to fit it in between touring worldwide at that time – it was quite difficult.

Is learning to arrange and direct music why you've worked for so many hotels and cruise lines, as well as regular concerts and gigs?¹

Yes, definitely! A formal musical training opens up many doors. I consider myself a musician and not just a guitarist.

¹ Steve's qualifications include Associate of the London College of Music (Diploma in music Theory and Harmony and Classical guitar performance) and B.A (Hons.) Music and Sound.

And probably also helped you to slip into any situation as a session player?

Definitely! I read music, which can be important sometimes.

Who are some of your favorite artists you've worked with?

So many – Barry Palmer is my favorite – his songwriting skills and voice are really in another class.

“It's important to keep learning”

When did you become a multi-instrumentalist?

Ha ha! I did that about ten years ago – I get a lot of what I call “bread and butter” gigs doing it around this holiday area where I live and work. Blues is an acquired taste for audiences, but general music for holidaymakers is easier to get work with and, as a professional who pays his bills from performing, it's important for me to keep playing live.

What are the ethnic instruments you play?

My “cabaret” show features the Greek bouzouki, the mandolin, the balalaika and of course various guitars.

Obviously you play all kinds of styles?

Yes, I can play most styles of guitar – not too good at jazz though – I’ll be working on that in the future, although I’ll concentrate more on the jazz blues side of it. It’s important to keep learning throughout your musical life.

But your heroes are mainly blues artists?

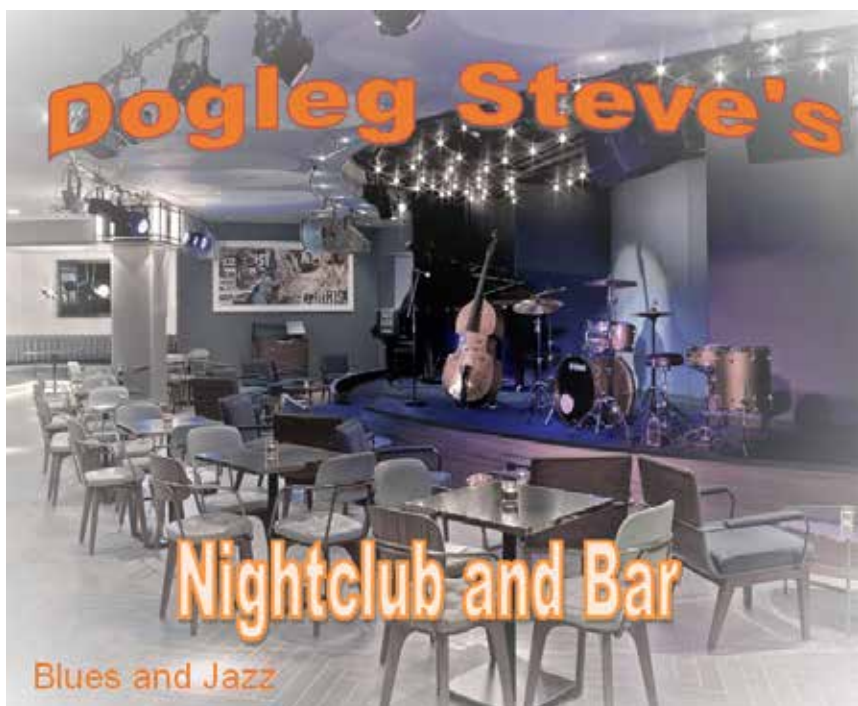
Oh yes indeed. Walter Trout, Matt Schofield, Josh Smith, Carl Verheyen to name but a few – and also some rock guitarists such as the usual suspects – Steve Vai, Satriani, etc. (in small doses!).

What’s so special about the blues?

The freedom it gives you to improvise your solos. The passion it creates. The so many varied styles of it...

How old were you when you left on your first international tour?

I was 20 when I went overseas for the first time. I went to Germany several times with different bands and loved it – I never made any money and we got ripped off all the time, but it was part of my stage-craft training. I’ve paid my dues. Over the years music has taken me to quite a few countries like Germany, Holland, France, South Africa, the USA, and the Caribbean.



Tell us a couple of your fondest memories from touring...

So many – I adored working in South Africa. The climate is wonderful and the people remarkable. During these times abroad, Christmas is usually spent in 80 degrees of heat, so that's a bit weird, and I always remember the time I was celebrating my Christmas dinner on the beach in Barbados!

Looking out to a crowd of 20,000 people is one of the things that will always be with me – your audience is something you remember always!

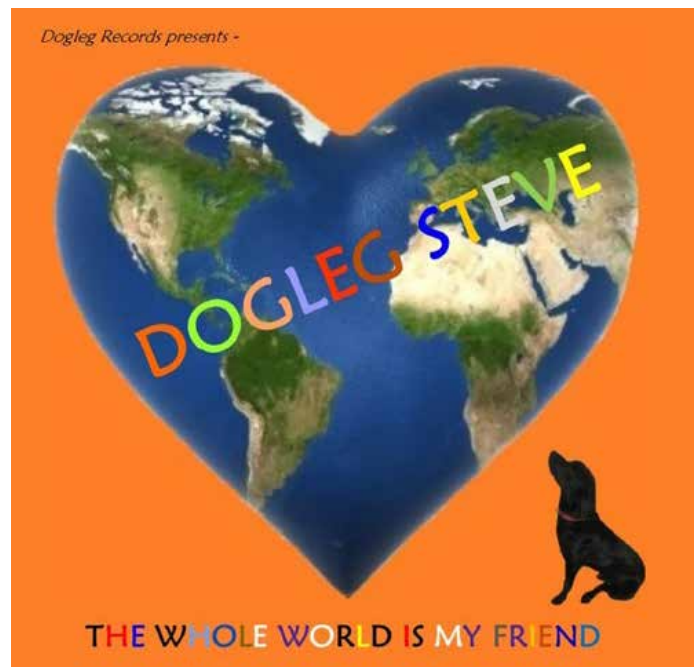
When did you start Dogleg Music and Dogleg recording studios?

I think in 2012, but it may have been earlier – mainly to write/produce rock and blues, although I do record and produce other artists if they want me to.

“Your audience is something you remember always!”

Was it blues or your love of different musical instruments that led you to cigar box guitars?

Interesting question. I think both. I had been looking at them online and thinking that would be cool to put in my show and then, bizarrely, a guy called Paul Tilbury from Yorkshire came up to me at a show and said he made them! So I bought one from him and that was it – I was hooked!



You wrote somewhere that your 2019 album “Cigar Box Pickin’” was inspired by different events in your life ?

I actually wrote it in 2017, but it wasn't finished until 2019. Yes, each song is about an event that took place in my life when I was writing my albums, inspired by either a place or a happening or a person in my life.

“Building guitars is an impulsive habit that’s difficult to get out of!”

How did “Psychedelia Man” slip into what’s basically a finger-picking ragtime blues journey?

Ha! Well I'd been listening to a lot of Robin Trower and I wanted to get the sound of his univibed guitar onto my track. I also wanted to give it a 60's Liverpool sound, so hence the Liverpool “Scouse” accent on the lady (my partner Brenda – hence also Brenda's Rag) talking through it. It's basically what I call a random improvisation on the slide – which I don't play much believe it or not.

It hasn't just been the urge to play all kinds of instruments – you started up The English Guitar Company about 25 years ago to build them?

Only classical guitars at that point. I now build acoustic guitars and cigar box guitars either for fun or for commissions.



And you say building guitars is a privilege?

I suppose a vocation is a better word – building guitars is an impulsive habit that’s difficult to get out of! Especially CBGs!

What’s the micro tilt system you developed for your cigar box guitar necks?

It’s based on the Fender 70’s neck tilt system that allows you to move the neck angle if it needs adjustment to get a better action – more for the people who fret chords and melodies than the slide people. A grub screw moves the neck up and down. It doesn’t work for all builds – I haven’t tried it on a resonator guitar, but it may be difficult to implement it into that sort of build. Chickenbone John also uses a similar method in some of his builds I believe. If you’re going to put a micro tilt system into your build, the grub screw method is the simplest I think.



What else is different about your CBGs?

I often use acoustic guitar techniques to make them a little better – some may say that a “primitive” build is good, but I’m afraid my “OCD²” would not allow for rough work, so all my builds are well made with no imperfections. I laminate my necks always (splice them). I always use an ebony fretboard, which I also import and sell on social media and my website. They are beautiful exotic ebony boards with a distinctive orange pattern – I love them!

And the “Shark” guitars?

The Shark idea came to me because I often play sitting down while watching TV and traditional guitars are cumbersome, so I wanted one that sits on my knee easily – hence the shape. The name came because its sort of fishy in shape.



2. “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder”

How much of songs like “Meeting With The Devil” or “She’s So Bad” from your “Nightclub and Bar” album could you play on a three-string guitar?

Funny you should say that as I am now in the process of adapting some of my album songs purely for CBG. Some won’t work, but a lot will – next year I will be recording a new album of these songs purely on CBG.

“I use four for picking and three for thrashing!”

I’ve recently added a three-string and four-string guitar from Lee Marshall – a very fine builder of the resonator/old age looking guitars – to my collection and they’re really nice to play. The strings on the three-string are much thicker and you get a different sound altogether from the four-string, so its horses for courses really – I use four for picking and three for thrashing ! I play the three-string in GDG tuning and also ADG and I’m thinking about recording some or all of my next album on three strings.

And finally, what’s in store for 2022?

Well, as I say the new CBG album and some studying. I think that continuing to study music is important to keep interested and not get stale. I am also thinking of starting a small teaching studio, but only very limited hours a week as teaching is very time consuming – and I never have enough time – who does, right?

I am also thinking of doing a video course, but the video recording of this may be tricky and I will probably need to get some help with that. There is a lot of teaching online these days, but unfortunately some of it is full of musical errors and it may be good if I put out a course as a fully trained, experienced professional with the correct answers, knowledge and experience.

Then, of course, there’s the continued building of instruments and the selling of my tone woods to makers. Whatever I do, I will be rock ‘n rolling! ☺ ■

<https://www.doglegsteve.com>
<https://www.theenglishguitarcompany.com>

Builders mentioned:

Paul Tilbury

Lee Marshall: <https://www.facebook.com/ozzy1112>

Chickenbone John: <https://www.facebook.com/chickenbonejohn>





Nanda Moura

Rodrigo Simas Photography

Feeling the blues

Interview Nanda Moura, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The blues, more than anything else, is powerful. It portrays struggle and taking a stand. It can be a comfort for those who suffer, and a celebration for those who feel happy. So no matter what mood you're in, the blues backs you up. That's how I see the blues.

CBGR: Nanda, you come from a family of musicians?

Nanda Moura: Yes! I have many family members who are musicians. I grew up in a musical environment, listening to trombone, trumpet, saxophone, clarinet... This influenced me to learn to play clarinet in my early teens. In my hometown, we formed the city band, where my uncle was the conductor. My grandfather was a guitar player, and my father is an excellent singer. I grew up surrounded by music on all sides.

Tell us about your first performance as a young girl with your father...

I was nine years old, and had already learned to play the guitar. At that time, my father was a singer in other musical groups. So we decided to start performing as a duo: I played the guitar and he sang.

My first performance with my father was unforgettable. I remember being very nervous; I was very small and had no

idea about what I was doing, but it felt really good to play. And my father gave me lots of support. Our first show lasted four hours and only had 20 songs in the repertoire so we spent the entire show looping songs. 😊

“I didn’t choose the blues, the blues chose me”

What other good memories do you have from back then?

I remember the first time I performed singing in the *Best Voice's* competition. Those days I was also learning a lot. As a teenager, I was able to study music with my own family, which was invaluable. My uncle, the conductor, taught me to read music and play the clarinet. And then there was all the experience I had performing with my father! Much of my musical knowledge comes from my family and I am so grateful for that!



Of all the music styles in Brazil, what made you pick the blues?

I didn't choose the blues, the blues chose me. Brazil is very rich musically, that's a fact, and it's impossible to escape the influences of Brazilian music. But the blues gets into your soul, and the soul has no boundaries. So you can see how passionate I am about the blues!

Do you see it related to music of Caribbean origin like salsa and bossa nova?

I must confess these are styles I don't know much about. But I see a lot of similarities between the blues and the music characteristic of the northeast region of Brazil, which is where I come from. There is a lot in common, ranging from the instruments used to the way of singing. That might be one of the reasons why I identify with the blues so much.

Is Brazilian blues music different from other countries?

Blues is a global language. Undoubtedly, each country eventually incorporates its musical characteristics into the style of playing, but whether here in Brazil or Japan, or India or Russia, the essence of playing the blues is basically the same.

Who are some of the Brazilian blues artists who have influenced you?

Brazil has some amazing blues artists. I can cite as great influences Otávio Rocha (slide guitar), Big Gilson (slide guitar), Maurício Sahady (guitar), Álamo Leal (guitar), Greg Wilson (vocals and guitar), Flávio Guimarães (vocals and harmonica), Jefferson Gonçalves (harmonica).

Did you know that Nuno Mindelis built his first guitar when he was a little kid growing up in Angola from an oil can, a piece of wood and fishing line for strings?

Yes I did! Nuno has a very interesting history and is one of the few blues artists in Brazil with an internationally recognized career. At least until now!

You've played songs from so many of the early blues singers – why did you wait until now to come out with an album?

I've always been more into studying the blues and preparing for shows. I still didn't feel the need to record an album. With the pandemic, live performances stopped happening, so I felt the need to express myself in some way. Then the album "Quarentena" was born, which means quarantine in Portuguese.

"This instrument fascinates me for its minimalism"

What made you pick the songs you did for "Quarentena"?

The album is my reflection on this difficult period we went through. All songs raise questions arising from the quarantine times – questions about personal responsibility, choices, priorities, social differences, relationships and expectations. I never record a song by accident. Each song touches me in some way and that's why they're in there.



Why a cigar box guitar on the cover?

The cigar box alone, in the dark, on top of a chair, conveys a message of loneliness, darkness, absence...feelings that represent much of the quarantine period. This instrument fascinates me for its minimalism. And that's exactly the idea of the album, the minimum necessary to make music: a chair, an instrument, and me!

It's actually a photo of a painting by a friend of yours?

Yes, it is. The cover was painted by a great friend and great artist called Sthephanie Corvett, from Pirassununga, São Paulo. Sthephanie stands out mainly for works done on motorcycle helmets and tanks. She is a very sensitive artist and perfectly captured the idea for the album.



The cover chair has great sentimental value for me. The album is an expression of how I felt during this difficult period of the pandemic, so the cover had to have a special touch too. The guitar is a real work of art and was created by another talented friend of mine in São Paulo, Guz Ferreiro from GuzGuitarsCo.

Why did you choose a three-string CBG for “Trouble So Hard” and “Nobody’s Fault But Mine”?

As I mentioned before, I am fascinated by the idea of making music from an instrument that needs so little to build it – the minimum necessary to build and play a guitar and, at the same time, make the sound I want to make.

“I am fascinated by the idea of making music from an instrument that needs so little to build it”

And you sing “Grinnin’ In Your Face” a cappella?

Yes! This song touches me deeply. Son House’s a cappella was brilliant. When I chose this song, I had no doubt that I should sing it a cappella too. My intention doing this song with just clapping as accompaniment, like in Son House’s original recording, was to show how little you need to make music! Pure singing and clapping your hands is the most rudimentary music that a human can make. There’s just the music and the message that it resonates.

When did you first come across cigar box guitars – are they popular in Brazil?

The first time I heard about cigar box guitars, I was studying Blind Willie Johnson. When I read that his first instrument was a cigar box guitar, as well as several other blues artists, I became fascinated. One day I came across Seasick Steve on YouTube. It was a completely different approach to the CBGs that I had never thought about. I was hooked. Then I discovered Guz from GuzGuitarsCo. I was checking all his posts on Instagram and soon he started checking mine...

“I have a lot to learn!”

Here in Brazil CBGs weren’t very popular until a few years ago. But I’ve noticed a growing popularity, especially among the blues musicians. Now we are seeing them built in a more professional way, with high-quality materials, electronics and workmanship – but still without losing the essence of their simplicity and how they sound. I think this has encouraged more people to buy CBGs and learn how to play them.

Are you going to add more of them to your collection?

Sure! Cigar box guitars opened my eyes and ears to another vision of how to make music. I definitely want to explore the sound of other CBGs, including two strings, four strings... I have a lot to learn!

Do you write your own songs as well?

I'm a blues singer who plays guitar. I can't imagine how I would write a song that would say something that hasn't already been said yet. The blues has a hundred years of history told in countless different ways. Thousands of songs. And it's all there for the asking. You have to search and deepen your study, but it's all there. So I haven't really felt the need to write my own songs yet.

Why do you think the blues makes people feel good?

The blues, more than anything else, is powerful. It portrays struggle and taking a stand. It can be a comfort for those who suffer, and a celebration for those who feel happy. So no matter what mood you're in, the blues backs you up. That's how I see the blues.

Any plans for a follow-up album or otherwise in 2022?

Yes! As a matter of fact I already have the next album in the works. It will be a completely different album from "Quarentena," which reflects the pain and suffering of these complicated times during the pandemic. It was a dark, sad album.

The next one will be quite the opposite and all about *celebration!* It will be an album to celebrate the fact that, after all we have been through, we endured, and *we survived!* I think that now, more than ever, we need to celebrate life! And it's this energy that I want to put into the next album in 2022... ■



Nanda Moura Blues:

<https://www.facebook.com/nandamourablues>
<https://www.youtube.com/c/NandaMouraBlues>
<https://www.instagram.com/nandamourablues>

Builders mentioned:

Guz Ferreiro, GUZGUITARSCO
<https://guzguitarsco.com>

THE ORIGINAL

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CBG'S CO. BRAND

Santos



Blowing your blues away

Guz Ferreiro, GUZGUITARSCO, São Paulo, Brazil

After all my years of playing guitar, the first guitar I reach for when I play is a CBG. I especially like three-string guitars. With only three strings, they are easier to play and more encouraging for anyone who wants to learn an instrument from scratch. But you can also do so much with them, so you never grow tired of them.

My full name is Gustavo Ferreiro Pinto. As a teenager I became involved in underground music when I formed my first punk rock and hardcore band in the 90s. I always liked musical genres like punk, blues, rock 'n roll that were not typically part of the Brazilian culture, so if you play this type of music you have a good chance of staying underground and not becoming mainstream.

I was the singer, but soon became interested in playing guitar. I took lessons and after a few years I ended up falling in love with the blues. I've always liked guitar solos and there's nothing like studying and drawing inspiration from the blues for soloing – not just because of the simple scales and blues chords, but because of the feeling behind the blues.

When I first saw cigar box guitars on the internet, I was captivated by their amazing history and unique sound – and wanted to build one! My first three-

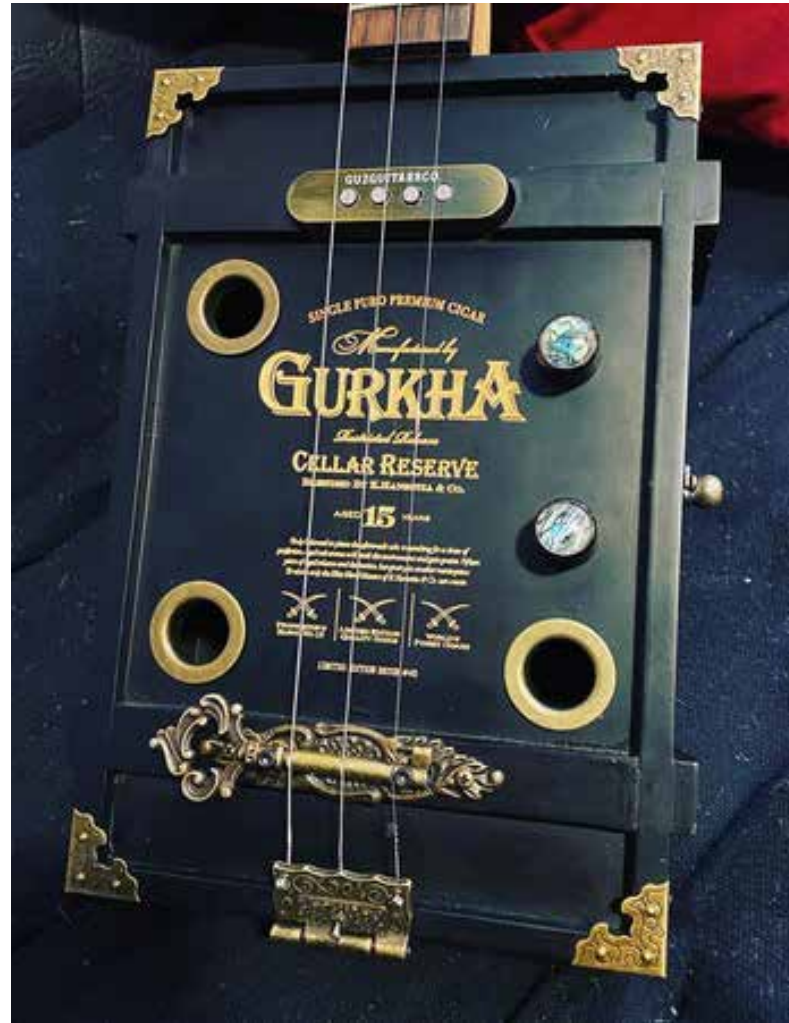


string guitar was made from a Dona Flor Brazilian cigar box and there's a funny story why I ended up giving that one to my cousin. She has a clothing brand with sustainable fabrics called "Biaquefez" and she asked me to play a CBG at her fashion show. The show was a success and people were very intrigued about my guitar, asking what it was because here in Brazil CBGs are a novelty. They really enjoyed the sound and that encouraged me to build more of them.

"People were very intrigued about my guitar"

After all my years of playing guitar, the first guitar I reach for when I play is a CBG. I especially like three-string guitars. With only three strings, they are easier to play and more encouraging for anyone who wants to learn an instrument from scratch. But you can also do so much with them, so you never grow tired of them. There are different ways of playing them and they're not just for blues musicians. You can play styles ranging from punk rock to metal, including almost all kinds of rock 'n roll.

When I built my first cigar box guitar in 2009, I didn't have any knowledge of luthiery, but lots of enthusiasm. I used my father's garage and his tools, some of which were my grandfather's very old ones (I still use some today). One guitar led to another, but at that stage I was still

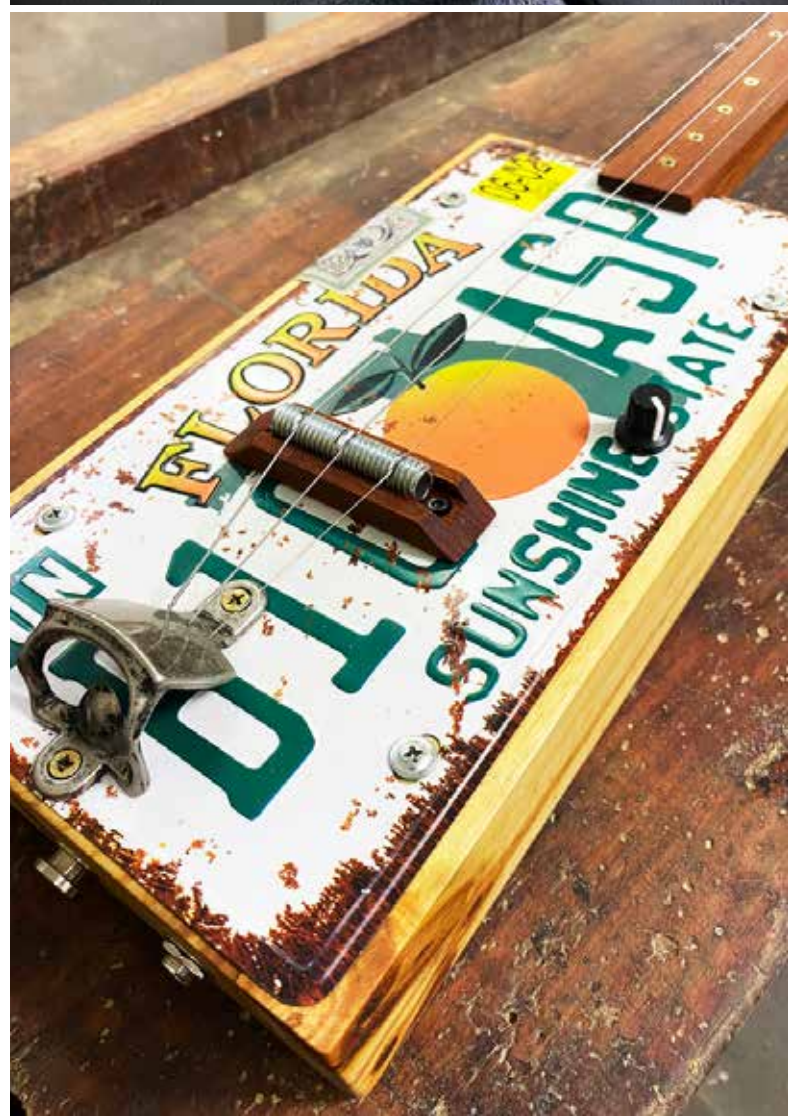


only building for my own use, without intending to sell any of them. Then one day I was invited to exhibit some guitars at a blues festival (the Mississippi Delta Blues Festival in Caxias do Sul, the biggest blues festival in Latin America). I took four guitars and gave one to the festival's owner in exchange for a mini booth that I shared with a blues record salesman. Several artists (including the main artist who closed the last show of the event) tested my "cigarras" and we did several jams during the festival. That's when I thought, I have to quit my job and make cigar box guitars!

"That's when I thought, I have to quit my job and make cigar box guitars!"

I created the nickname "Cigarra" for my CBGs when I started my Facebook business page as their advertising policies do not allow the word "cigar." "Cigarra" mixes the word "cigar" in English with "guitarra" in Portuguese and also means "cicada" in Brazil. Since cicadas sing loud all their lives, it seemed like the perfect word to describe a small guitar that makes a catchy and often powerful sound. I studied guitar, luthiery and even carpentry with the aim of introducing people around me to the amazing world of CBGs and their unique sound, and I've been making them non-stop since 2011.

Some are basic with nuts, bolts and no frets. Others are ornate – but not just for hanging on the wall! I love exotic woods, engraved bridges and pickups, woodburning and transfers on the



headstocks and I'll use anything from bullet casings to bottle openers for different guitars. I've been inspired by many builders in a very friendly community over the years and people I talk to around the world are very helpful and receptive. The GUZGUITARSCO website also features, among other things, accessories like mini amps, straps, slides, backpacks, notebooks and a wide range of apparel and headgear for home and busking – notably for players of all ages, young and old!

“I’ve been inspired by many builders in a very friendly community”

Last month we introduced a novel line of guitar straps especially for CBGs based on old photos of American Civil War soldiers who used rope to tie their guitars. These straps are made out of recycled materials (e.g. discarded pet bottles for the rope) and do not need to be tied to the headstock, but can be attached using the two adjustable metal fasteners.

CBGs are easily carried around and can be played on the porch, the street or on stage. They're small enough to fit into a backpack, but sound enormous when they're hooked up to an amplifier. That's why they're equally interesting for all levels of players. Put simply, cigar box guitars belong to the blues! As I'm also a musician, it gives me great pleasure to support Brazilian musicians like Nanda Moura Blues, Terno de Madeira and Shiron the Iron. Soon we will be playing



shows in São Paulo, Campinas, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, which are the four main cities where the interest in cigar box guitars is growing and where I think there is a lot of potential for including them in the Brazilian music scene.

“Put simply, cigar box guitars belong to the blues!”

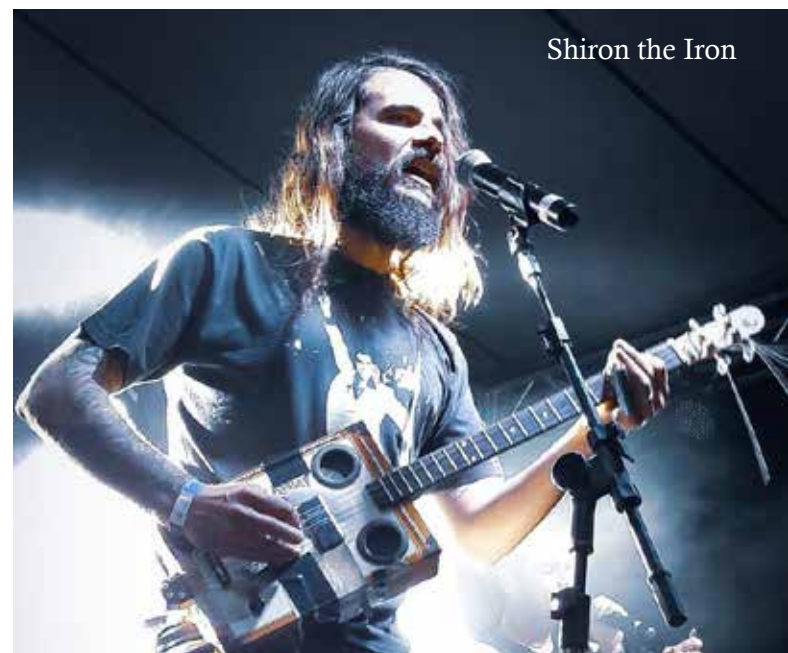
I went through several difficult moments in my life before I made the GUZGUITARSCO company official in 2019 and started displaying my work on social media, after leaving an advertising job to focus on my passion for music, art and marketing. With each day that passes, I keep evolving to meet the needs of my customers from the most demanding to the most traditional guitars. Today I can proudly say that all the positive things I’ve achieved in my life are because I made the choice to professionally build cigar box guitars! ■

<https://www.facebook.com/guzguitarsco-115214623196730>

<https://www.guzguitarsco.com.br>



Nanda Moura Blues:



Shiron the Iron



Terno de Madeira

Contributors

RB Stone has been touring the globe for almost 40 years, performing in over 33 countries. In 2021, he played several venues and festivals around the USA, from the North Atlantic Blues Fest in Maine to the Buckingham Blues Fest in Florida. He's released 18 CDs, including a cigar box guitar album with Ben Rice in 2020, which topped all the blues and roots charts. Cutting a wide musical path, he appeals to and is followed by rock, jam, outlaw country, folk, Americana and blues music lovers.



Paul Atkinson is the Professor of Design and Design History at Sheffield Hallam University, UK. He has written a number of books, including one called "Amplified: A Design History of the Electric Guitar." He has also written a documentary film on the CBG scene in the UK called "Three Chords and the Truth," which screened at film festivals around the world and which formed the basis of the BBC documentary "Cigar Box Blues: The Makers of a Revolution."



Steve Davis a.k.a. Dogleg Steve is a multi-instrumental musician born in 1962 in the UK. At the age of 18 he was playing in local rock bands performing regularly around the northern club circuit. At the age of 20, he became a fully professional touring musician. One notable achievement was his tour of South Africa in the early eighties, where he appeared before an audience of over 20,000 people. He has also worked as a session musician/producer and arranger for many top artists around the world.



Nanda Moura is a blues singer and guitarist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Born into a family of musicians, she started her career very early at the age of nine, singing and playing guitar with her father. She is a traditional blues aficionado influenced by artists from the 1920s and 30s such as Blind Willie Johnson, Son House, Robert Johnson, Skip James and also the great divas Bessie Smith, Memphis Minnie and Ma Rainey. She is considered the "new voice of Brazilian blues" and is currently preparing for her first international tour.



Gustavo Ferreiro Pinto (Guz) started building cigar box guitars in Brazil in 2009. He calls them “Cigarras,” which combines the word “cigar” in English with “guitarra” in Portuguese and also means “cicada” – the perfect word to describe a small guitar that makes a catchy and/or powerful sound. His GUZGUITARSCO website offers everything musicians of all ages and levels of ability need for home and busking, or for professional musicians to include in their gigs and albums.



Ross Hewitt a.k.a. Huey Ross was born in Australia in 1953 on BB King’s birthday – the same year that color TVs and transistor radios appeared for sale in stores and the first James Bond novel was published. Over the years he has worked as a tennis teacher, journalist, translator, editor and graphic designer, and now lives in a village in Switzerland. He enjoys building and playing cigar box guitars, as well as editing and contributing to CBG Review.



Next issue: April 2022

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CBG Review playlists

⇒ www.cbgreview.com/playlists



Cigar Box Guitar Classic
CBGreview

1 Rum River 4:13
Dusk Brothers


2 Cool Times 4:06
Cigarbox Man

3 The Keys (Live) 6:09
Juzzie Smith

4 Juke Joint on Moses Lane 3:32
Fiona Boyes

5 Bulletproof - Tangle Eye Mix 5:19
Samantha Fish

6 Shotgun Blues 3:19
Chickenbone John



Cigar Box Guitar Easy
CBGreview

1 Devil Got My Woman 4:57
Nanda Moura Blues


2 Peace at Last - The Boxer 1:31
Lion Says

3 Electro Swamp Sweat 1:16
Red Dog Guitars

4 Gentle Ways (Live) 4:10
Juzzie Smith

5 Mal Menor - Cocó Remix 5:22
Cigarbox Man, Coco, Álvaro...

6 Moni 3:44
Stevo Atambire



Cigar Box Guitar Timeless
CBGreview

1 Espiritu Papàgo 4:12
Ghalia Volt, Dean Zuccherio


2 Rollin' 2:59
Justin Johnson

3 The Damage Done 3:12
Dusk Brothers

4 Simple Road 4:12
Juzzie Smith

5 People from Everywhere 3:41
Cigarbox Man

6 Crossroads 3:23
Chickenbone John



Cigar Box Guitar World
CBGreview

1 Jesus Needs a Gig 4:18
Ben Rice, RB Stone


2 Trouble so Hard 2:48
Nanda Moura Blues

3 Walk My Dog 4:02
Dogleg Steve

4 You Can't Teach An Old Dog... 3:34
Seasick Steve

5 Bad Apple 4:29
Ghalia Volt

6 Me Incendié 3:12
Cigarbox Man



Cigar Box Guitar Instru...
CBGreview

1 Nickajack 2:00
RB Stone

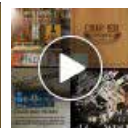
2 Salvation Blues 1:52
Dogleg Steve

3 Whiskey Barrel Blues 3:22
Justin Johnson

4 Cigarharp Blues 3:14
Micky Wolf

5 Superhero 3:26
Juzzie Smith

6 Romp in the Swamp 2:45
Justin Johnson



Cigar Box Guitar Instru...
CBGreview

1 St. Martin's Blues 2:25
Dogleg Steve

2 Ghost of the Mountain 5:38
Justin Johnson

3 Smiley's World 2:30
Capt'n Catfish

4 Tico-Tico No Fuba 3:45
Cigar Box Serenaders

5 Maypole Hill 2:57
Shane Speal

6 Desert Night 2:20
Micky Wolf

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