

Rock Guitar Daily with Tony Conley

What's Great In The World Of Rock And Roll Guitar

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Dave Kilminster: From Inside 'The Wall' - "Whatever I Play, I Inject My Heart And Soul Into It" (Part I)



Dave Kilminster is obviously a musician of many gifts - while known to millions as the guy on top of Roger Waters's *The Wall* recreating some of history's greatest guitar solos, he's also a great songwriter, singer, and record maker in his own right.

After years of, 'Helping others succeed in their careers,' Dave is currently recording a new solo record following the re-release of *Scarlet - The Director's Cut*, his first solo outing. *Scarlet* made it on to my 'Top 12 For 2012,' and it would appear that this is but the beginning for Kilminster - in addition to a new solo record, he's also hoping to see a long awaited collaboration with Guthrie Govan later in the year. That, along with more shows atop *The Wall*, and a European tour with Murray Hockridge (with whom Kilminster recorded the excellent acoustic covers CD, *Closer To Earth* in 2011) should ensure the world sees no shortage of Dave Kilminster in 2013.

I caught up with Dave just days after his grand finale for 2012, a great performance with Waters at the 12-12-12 Concert For Sandy Relief (album now available on iTunes), and we covered a tremendous amount of ground - I've never laughed so much through an interview, we had a great chat and I hope you enjoy it as much as we did!

Dave Kilminster: "Ah Tony! How the devil are you? I just realized that you're the Tony that did that amazing review, aren't you? It was the first one Billy James sent me, and I looked at that and thought, 'Wow, if the rest are even a quarter of that, I'm going to be OK!'"

<http://rockguitardaily.blogspot.com/2012/11/dave-kilminster-scarlet-directors-cut.html>



Keeping with the jovial theme of mutual admiration, I felt compelled to tell Dave that I had spoken to Steve Lukather just the day before, and the world's most recorded guitarist had raved about his love for Dave's playing:

Kilminster: "Wow. Oh my God! That's just....I'm....it doesn't happen very often, but I'm totally speechless. That is totally amazing (You must understand - Lukather is considered by Jeff Beck, Carlos Santana, Eddie Van Halen, and countless other pros as 'the guitarists' guitarist').

"I was quite disappointed, actually, I heard that when we played the Coliseum in LA earlier this year, someone said, 'Steve Lukather is backstage,' - I was hoping to catch up with him after the show, and I couldn't find him, so we've never met, but that, that's amazing! Lucky, I'm sitting down at the moment, thank you so much for passing that along! I'll have to drop him a note, I feel very honored!"



It's beyond refreshing to hear anyone speak with such joy and humility, especially when the person gifting the world with their graciousness just climbed off stage after performing for two billion viewers. I asked Dave how he felt about the 12-12-12 benefit concert:

Kilminster: (chuckling) "I was pretty scared, actually! When I first read on the website that it was going to be broadcast to over a billion people, I just sat there in a state of shock for a little while.

"As we got closer and we rehearsed, it was sounding really good - especially after we sound checked that afternoon. Everything just felt really nice, really comfortable, and it wasn't as cold as I'd remembered it being previously, because it is a hockey arena, and sometimes it gets a bit chilly in there, which is not great for the hands. But we did soundcheck, and I thought, 'This is going to be alright!' The thing to do, obviously, is to just focus on what you're going to do, and you can't think about other things."

"I was happy, relieved, whatever - there were a couple of little moments....I'm a perfectionist, so there's a couple of moments where there were slightly sharp bends, and that was just way too much adrenalin! I was just happy to be involved - for such a great cause, too! To be on the same stage with all those amazing musicians, and bands, and such. Yeah, it was a perfect way to end the year, really!"



Dave Kilminster is a very unique musician - gifted with an almost absurd amount of expression in his own music and playing, he's also able to mimic nearly exactly the performances of others, perhaps given to his many years as one of Britain's premier guitar instructors, perhaps given to the truth that the man is simply - a true musician. I wondered how he's approached channeling the work of one of rock's most iconic soloists, Pink Floyd's David Gilmour:

Kilminster: "I guess I'm just treating it, and Roger treats the Pink Floyd albums in the same way, as a classical piece. Kind of like a classical musician, I'm approaching the music as - that's what's been written, so that's what I'm going to have to reproduce.

"Whatever I play, I inject my heart and soul into it. So it still sounds a bit like me, I suppose, but really I'm just trying to keep Roger happy, trying to keep the Pink Floyd fans happy, because that's what they want to hear, really. That's the music they grew up listening to, and there's the solos - they all know them note for note.

"I just try to be as respectful as possible to the original recordings. With any music I play, really, it's the music - you don't let things like ego get in the way. I just try to get as close to the original parts as possible."



Playing *The Wall* every night to a stadium full of Floyd devotees is certainly, a huge and daunting task, but what about learning the album, and auditioning for the position? Even though Dave had been in Waters's touring band, and the *Dark Side Of The Moon* tour, he still had to audition for *The Wall* band - and he had never heard the record!:

Kilminster: "Yeah, actually, I had never heard the album before! So, the first thing I did was to go out and buy a copy (insert big laugh)! I just kind of played it in the car for a few days before I picked up a guitar - I thought I'd rather get used to the tunes as tunes. I wanted to know the structures before I even started working out keys, or what effects are being used.

"Knowing how Roger likes to sort of throw things at you at the last minute, I thought, 'You know, I'm going to be prepared for this album - I'm going to work out every single guitar part, and so I did. I transcribed every guitar part on the album, and I also wrote out all the lyrics in case I needed to sing anything. I approached everything so that when we got together for the rehearsals, I felt pretty confident, like I was ready for anything he'd throw at me. And, one of the first things he said, as we started going through *Mother*, he said, 'Um..., Dave, can you play bass on this one?' (More laughter)

"It just goes to show, you can never be too prepared! Well, I obviously hadn't written out the bass lines, so.... I love working with Roger, he's such a perfectionist, such an amazing arranger, and he finds the people to do the right things - it was a real honor to go out and reproduce this album.

"I'd worked with him before on the *Dark Side Of The Moon* tour, and this was a fairly familiar scenario. I had to work out all the guitar parts because I didn't know what would be asked of me. I thought, rather than to try and memorize everything, I'd just write everything out, and then during rehearsals I could just pull out the pieces of paper that I'd need to play. I hate reading music - I can do it, but I dislike it. I don't think it has anything to do with playing music. I think that if you're going to play music, it has to come from inside, and reading music is coming from outside."



If you've heard Dave Kilminster masterfully replicating *The Wall*, you've no doubt been amazed by just how faithfully he recreates history, but you may be even more amazed to find out that in no way, shape, or form does Dave attempt to clone Gilmour's gear:

Kilminster: "That was the other thing. I didn't want....I'm not necessarily overly fond of some of the overdrive sounds on that album! It's just a personal thing. I thought that rather than getting the same sounds using Big Muffs and Electric Mistresses and all that antiquated stuff, I thought that if I just played the exact same lines as the record with the exact same phrasing, then I hoped that would be close enough, because I have my own sound.

"The real sound comes from the fingers, anyway, but I just thought I'd see how much I could get away with without making it sound like, uh, Van Halen does Pink Floyd, or something! I used my own tone and I tried that, and nobody said anything, so I thought, well OK, I'm going to get away with this. I don't like too much compression on the overdrive, and I don't like the fuzziness - I guess my tone is a little cleaner in places."



Speaking of the superb tones he gets with Waters, I asked Dave about his use of Brunetti amplifiers. Most readers may not have even heard of Brunetti, but I've a feeling that is soon to change. Kilminster uses a pair of Brunetti Mercury EL34 models, powered by transformers from the renowned Mercury Magnetics - it seems the toughest thing about these amazing amps is how to further evolve them. I asked how Dave found these toneful beasts:

Kilminster: "Ha! That's a good question! I was just about to do a tour of Italy with my good friend Guthrie Govan, and we were trying to contact Paul Cornford, to find out whether he had any of his Cornford amps over in Italy - those are the amps I used on the previous tour. Guthrie tried sending him a few e-mails, and couldn't seem to connect with him, and we were getting very close to the tour starting. "Then one day, Guthrie says, 'You know, I did a clinic over in Italy recently and they had this Brunetti amp which sounded great, maybe we should contact them.' So we called them up, and they said, 'Yeah, sure, we can lend you some amps for the tour.'"

"As soon as I plugged into this little combo that they had lent me, I knew that was the amp I wanted to use on the tour. It was the first time I ever found an amp that had an amazing clean sound and an amazing overdrive sound. If you want a clean sound, you'd generally go with something like a Fender, and for a great overdrive sound you get a Marshall, but I'd never found an amplifier that did both of these things really well, and this one did! I was just astonished!

"Before The Wall tour, I was considering going the other way - the Eric Johnson sort of way, where you get two, or three amps, which I really didn't want to do. But then I discovered the Brunetti amps and they're incredible, just absolutely incredible."



Using two fifty watt amps for a tour of this size, you might well assume that Dave's cranking them to ten, but in fact, he can't. Utilizing Marco Brunetti's design capabilities and some serious transformers from Mercury Magnetics, he's able to run the amps at just twenty watts each, and still have loads of gas in the tank. I asked Dave if he was really running the amps at twenty watts a piece:

Kilminster: "Yeah, that's right! I've got the two amps in stereo running twenty watts each, but they're up less than half. I think if they were up next to a hundred watt Marshall, you wouldn't be able to hear the Marshall at all."

"In fact, Marco just sent me an e-mail a couple of weeks ago - he said, 'I really want to do a signature model for you.' Yeah, but the problem is.... He said, 'What would you improve on it?' and I said, 'I don't know, it's pretty much perfect!' I think I'm going to have to give it some pretty serious thought to come up with something (more laughter).

"It was such a great discovery for me, Marco is an amazing guy, and I see that perfectionist attitude in what he does, it's kind of the same as what I try to do, I try to do perfectly - so yeah, we get on really well."



Another key ingredient in the Kilminster arsenal is his custom Suhr Guitar. The guitar is visibly identifiable due to the elaborate 'Rose' graphics, conceived by Ann-Marie Helder - she also researched and composed the Egyptian hieroglyphics seen on the back of the guitar's body. Using pyrographic tools, Helder burnt both designs into the guitar. Turns out the guitar itself is a design of Dave's that was built to spec by Suhr:

Kilminster: "Guthrie was using one of their guitars and I was looking for someone to build me a Telecaster style guitar, but with a kind of Strat style pickup configuration and tremolo. He said, "You should check out Suhr, they make really good stuff, So I told them exactly what I wanted and the Rose guitar, that was the first thing they ever made for me. It's still my favorite guitar, probably the best sounding guitar I have at the moment.

"The pickups are bolted straight into the body, that's sort of Eddie Van Halen's fault, I'm afraid! I've always admired Eddie for putting amazing sounding guitars together. I just borrowed one, or two things - I thought, yeah, screwing the pickup into the wood, that makes complete sense, and the absence of finish makes a huge difference as well. I've had guitars with even a little bit of finish, and it affects the tone.

"Suhr is actually making me another guitar which is like a direct replacement for the Rose guitar. I said to leave the body completely natural - I know it's going to get dents, and chips, but at the end of the day, I want it to play music."

This interview would be great if it stopped right here, but to be honest, we're only half way done. Please join us for Part II, in which we'll cover what Dave is going to be up to in 2013, and this includes much more on his work with Guthrie Govan, Roger Waters's The Wall, Scarlet - The Director's Cut, his exciting new solo project, and a wonderful anecdote concerning one Jimmy Page.

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