

HOW LINK WRAY & DANNY GATTON LED A ROCKABILLY REVIVAL



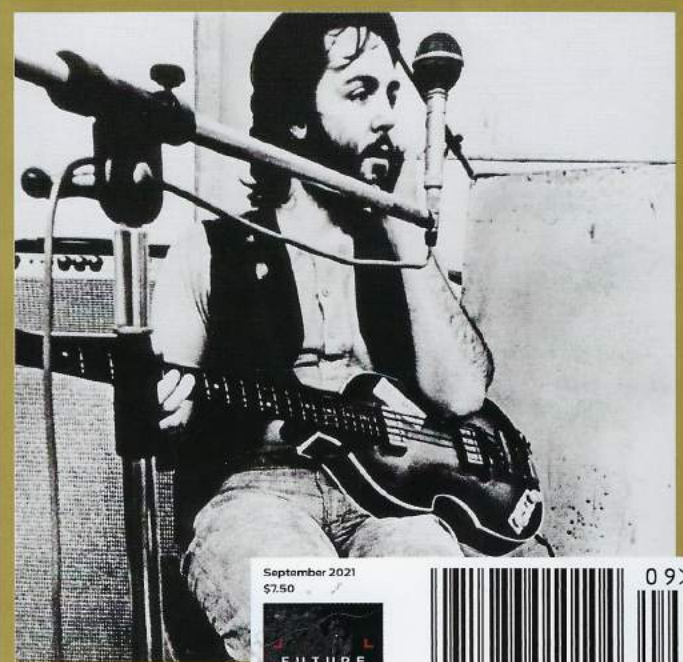
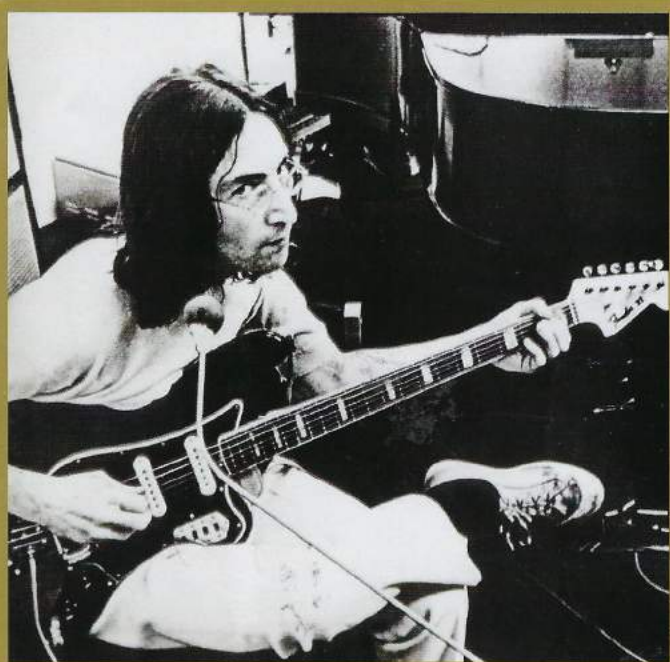
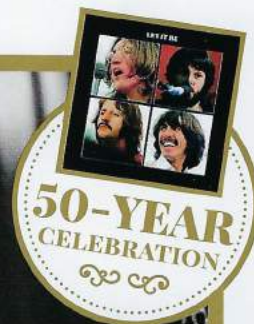
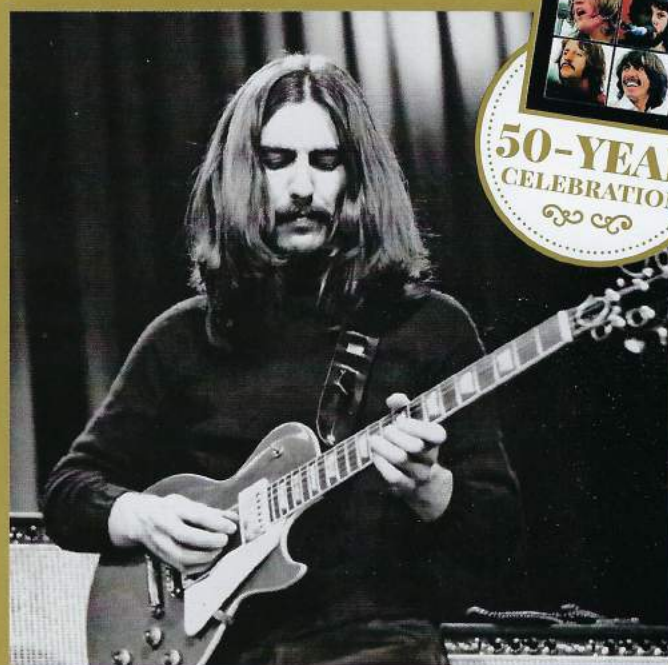
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# Guitar Player

## THE BEATLES

LET IT BE

*The guitars and gear behind their return to rock & roll*



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PLUS JAPAN & ITALY'S WILDEST VINTAGE AXES





## LET IT BEATLES

**THERE ARE MANY** ways to approach the Beatles' career: album by album, era by era, haircut by haircut. But the group's choices of guitars and other gear is an especially enjoyable and revealing method for examining the development of their music and sounds. The period beginning in 1968 is particularly interesting, as it was then that some great new guitars and amps entered the picture during the making of the White Album. Come January 1969 and the recording of *Let It Be*, their gear lineup expanded with the addition of several pieces from Fender, including the company's then-new silverface amps, which make a such a pleasing sight in the previews for director Peter Jackson's new documentary, *The Beatles: Get Back*. This issue, we take a look at that gear and the history behind it.

Coincidentally, this August marks the 50th anniversary of another Beatles-related event: George Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh, the celebrated August 1971 benefit show that became the first of its kind in the world of rock and roll. Recognizing that little research has been done into the guitars used for that event, writer Nikki O'Neill did some sleuthing to uncover not only details about the gear but also to get first-hand stories from Peter Frampton and Badfinger guitarist Joey Molland about the concert and how two of its most famous performers almost didn't show up. We hope this gear extravaganza will hold you over while waiting for the release of *The Beatles: Get Back*, now slated for release in November. Incidentally, anyone seeking more Beatles reading should check out *Fab Fools* by our own production editor, Jem Roberts, in which he explores the group's adventures in comedy, from their classic films to cartoons and pantomime.

I hope you're having a great summer. Enjoy the issue.

*Chris Scapelliti*

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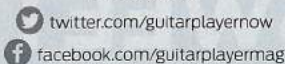
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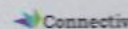
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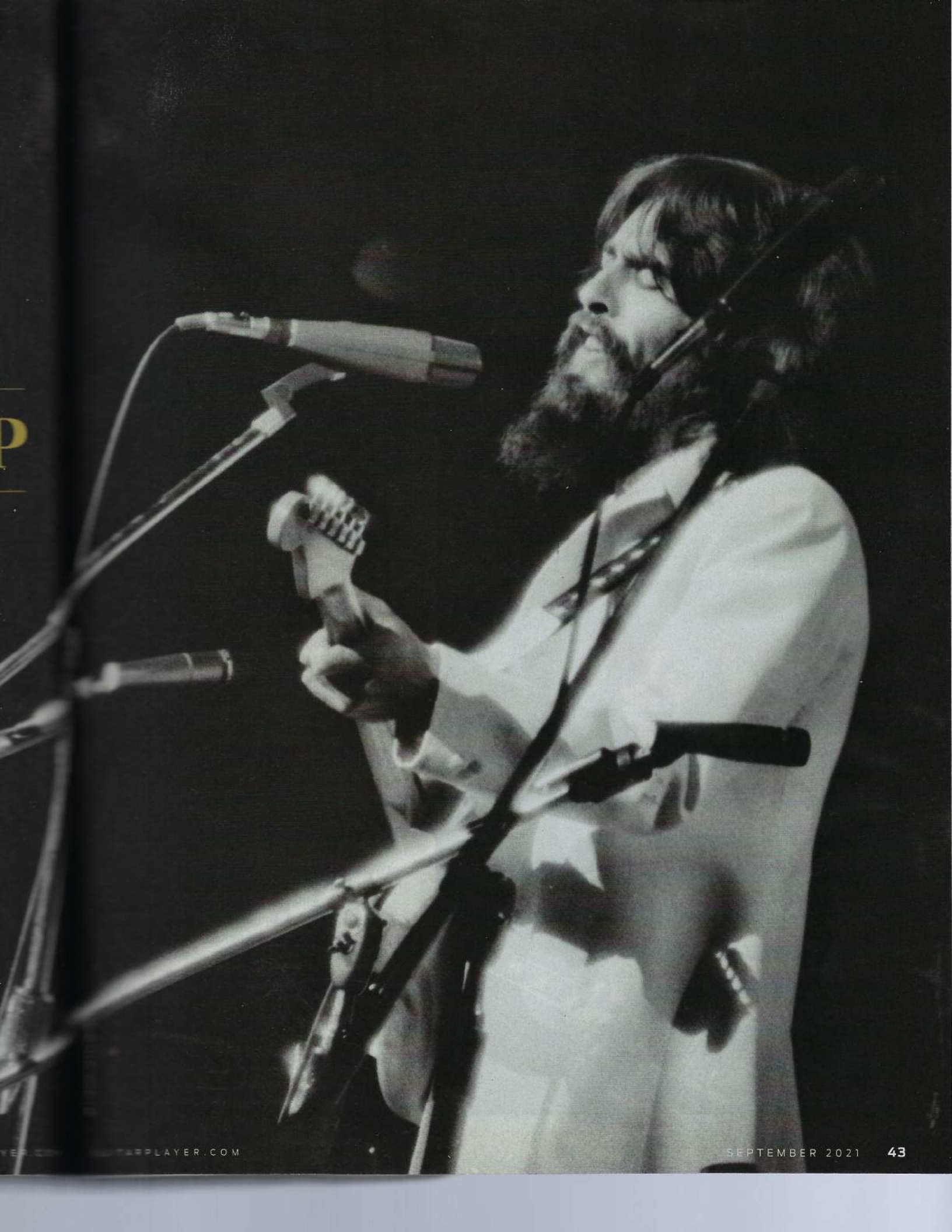




# WITH A LITTLE HELP

In the summer of 1971, **George Harrison** corralled a who's who of his musical friends to answer the call for humanitarian aid to Bangladesh. Two of his closest companions nearly left him hanging.

BY NIKKI O'NEILL



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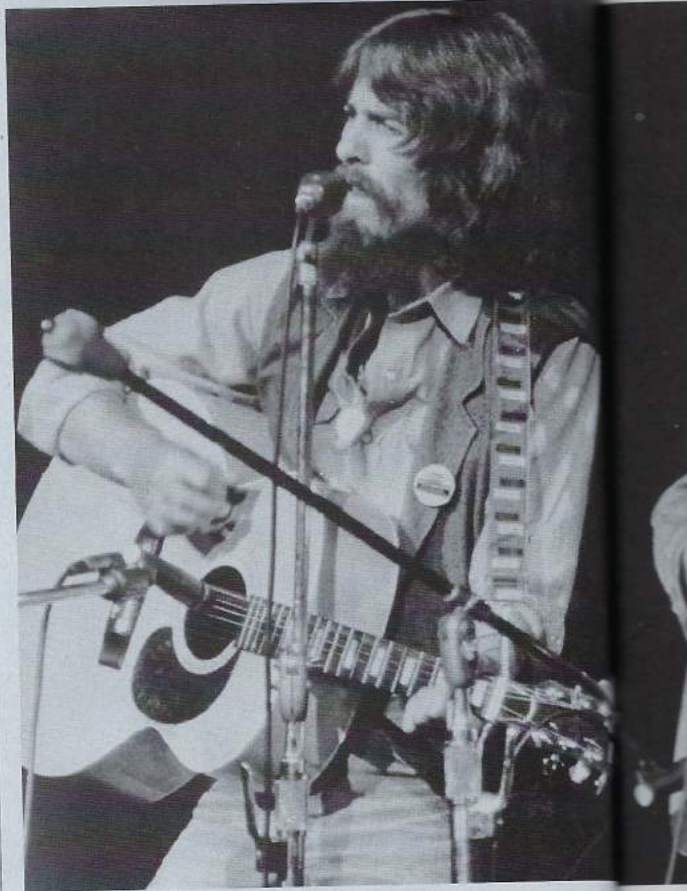
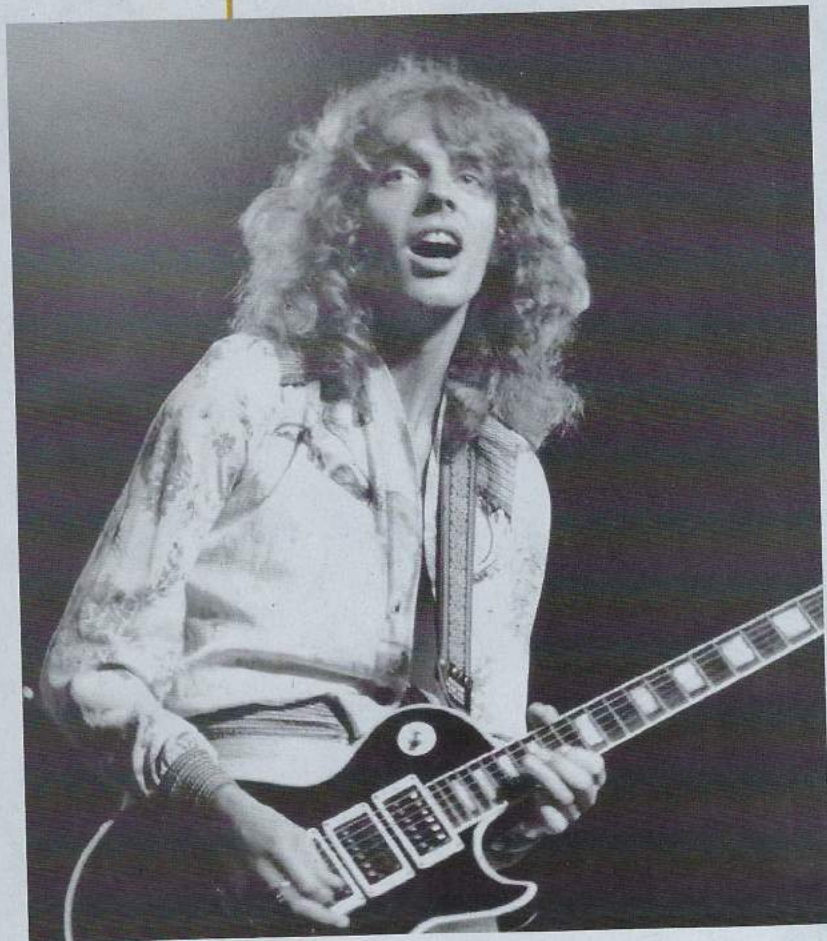


**F**IFTY YEARS AGO, Bangladesh was in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. Millions of refugees in what was formerly East Pakistan were fleeing genocidal massacres and rape in the Bangladesh War of Independence, as well as lingering devastation from the 1970 Bhola cyclone, the deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded, that left at least half a million dead in its wake. The people were starving, but their plight was largely unknown in the West. Ravi Shankar knew he had to do something to bring attention and aid to the country. The famed Indian sitarist reached out to his friend George Harrison and asked him to do what only a famous former Beatle could do: Bring musicians and fans together to help end the disaster.

What Harrison and Shankar achieved was a massive benefit concert that was the first of its kind. Held 50 years ago this summer, on August 1, the Concert for Bangladesh gathered rock and roll's royalty in New York City for a pair of shows to raise money for — and awareness of — the humanitarian crisis unfolding halfway around the globe. In a matter of weeks, Harrison managed to secure participation

**RIGHT: George Harrison and Bob Dylan perform during Dylan's set.**

**Peter Frampton was tapped to play the show but was never informed.**



from such luminaries as his fellow former Beatle Ringo Starr, keyboardist Billy Preston, pianist and guitarist Leon Russell, bassist and longtime Beatle friend Klaus Voormann, studio guitar ace Jesse Ed Davis, Zappa collaborator Don Preston, the up-and-coming band Badfinger and a number of other musicians and singers. Together with Shankar and his fellow musicians, they performed a pair of sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden, including a 2:30 p.m. matinee and 8:00 p.m. show.

The concerts drew 40,000 people and raised \$250,000 for UNICEF, while the 1971 triple live album and 1972 documentary of the show eventually raised millions more. Even before the concert took place, Harrison had released his single "Bangla Desh" on the Beatles' Apple label. The track, which detailed the plight of the Bangladeshi people, was put into heavy rotation in the lead-up to the shows, bringing the single to number 23 on the *Billboard* charts.

Harrison's achievement would prove nothing short of a miracle. No rock and roll musician had attempted anything like it before, and no template existed for a show of this size and with guests of such stature. The Concert for Bangladesh would cement the notion of a moral imperative for rock and rollers to do their part for those in need, as it laid the groundwork for the charity concerts that followed in the 1980s and beyond, including Live Aid and Farm Aid.

Yet in the days before the show, Harrison was filled with doubt and insecurity. He hadn't performed in front of a large crowd since the Beatles' final tour, in 1966. But those wild shows were scripted affairs



# WHILE THEIR GUITARS GENTLY WEEP

Here are the main axes that wailed at the Bangladesh benefit.

BY NIKKI O'NEILL

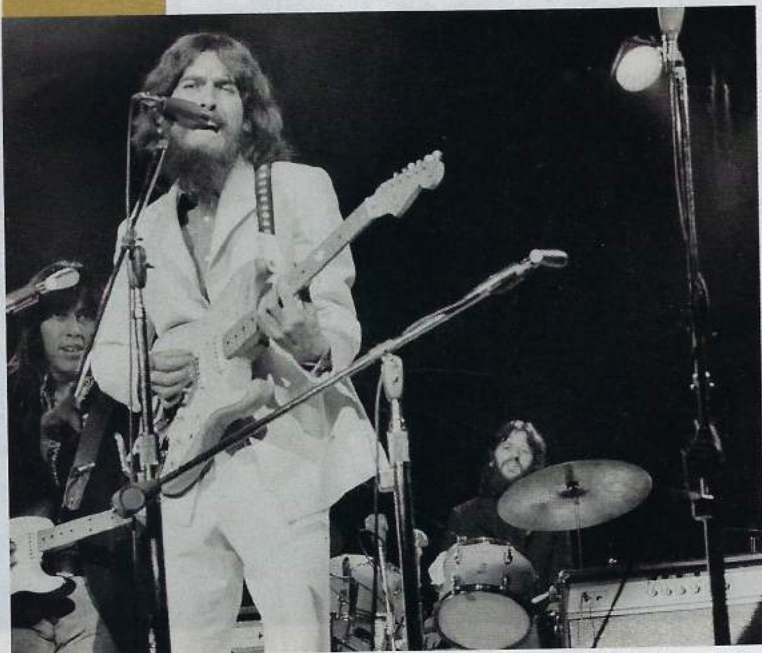
AS PETER FRAMPTON noted, there was no shortage of guitarists at the Concert for Bangladesh. And while some of the guitars that were played at one or both shows are famous — consider Eric Clapton's "Brownie" Strat, which he used for the second show after abandoning the Gibson Byrdland he played in the first set — others remain mired in mystery. Here's a guide to the main examples wielded at the concerts.

## 1 GEORGE HARRISON'S MYSTERY STRAT

Harrison spent much of the show playing a stripped Fender Strat with a '50s maple neck, a guitar whose background has baffled many. Its only known appearances were at the Concert for Bangladesh and on *The Dick Cavett Show* two months later, when Harrison sat in on slide guitar with Gary Wright and the Wonder Wheel. Some believe he rented it from Manny's Music in Manhattan, but it's unlikely he

1 George Harrison's mystery Strat

2 Dylan's 1963 Martin D-28



would have had the same guitar twice. And as Molland says, "I don't think he would've rented a guitar for a show like that." Perhaps it was a gift from Clapton, who had purchased six mid-'50s Strats for a bargain price at the Sho-Bud guitar shop in Nashville, and given three of them to Pete Townshend, Steve Winwood and Harrison. Another theory is that the Bangladesh Strat is a late '50s-early '60s transitional model that featured a maple neck and three-ply pickguard, and that Harrison had simply stripped it of its finish, just as he and Lennon had done with their Epiphone Casinos around the time of the *White Album*.

"There was a phase in England, where everybody wanted their Fender guitars stripped," Frampton says, "including me. [*Humble Pie* bassist] Greg Ridley and [*Small Faces/Faces* multi-instrumentalist] Ian McLagan. Ian and I were pretty handy, so we got a paint stripper, got all the paint off and put polyurethane varnish on. None of us realized at the time how we were destroying the value of those guitars."

Of course, many players of the time simply gave their now-priceless guitars — like Harrison's rosewood Telecaster [see page 36] — away to friends. Harrison related the story of how he gave this particular Strat to Spike Milligan: "He was at my house one day with Peter Sellers. Peter was playing the drums, Spike was playing the piano, and I was playing guitar. Then Spike got off the piano and wanted to play the guitar, so I plugged him in to this Strat through a little Champ amplifier. He said, 'Oh, I haven't played for 30 years,' but he just picked it up and it sounded like Django Reinhardt or something. And I thought, Well, that's good. So when he left, I put it in the case, and put it and the Champ in Peter Sellers' boot and told him, 'When you drop Spike off give him this. It's the Strat from the Concert for Bangladesh.'"

## 2 1963 MARTIN D-28

Bob Dylan bought this Martin in the late '60s and used it for 10 years, according to his repairman, Larry Cragg, who bought the guitar from him in 1977 for \$500. Cragg, who nicknamed it Bob, kept the guitar unplayed in its original case and in a humidity- and temperature-controlled environment until he sold it at auction in 2017 for \$396,500.

THOMAS MONTERBY/DAILY NEWS/GETTY IMAGES (HARRISON); MICHAEL COHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (DYLAN)