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FENDER NEWS: AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVE KILMINSTER

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Dave Kilminster on his love for Telecaster guitars and playing The Dark Side of the Moon on tour with Roger Waters

England's Dave Kilminster has a pretty sweet gig these days. The always-busy Bristol-born guitar ace can be found just across the concert stage from Roger Waters, wielding one among his fleet of beloved Telecaster guitars on Waters' current world tour. One of the highlights of this outing is the performance - in its entirety - of Pink Floyd's landmark and bazillion-selling 1973 chart mainstay, The Dark Side of the Moon.

Kilminster, who is also a busy producer, guitar teacher and writer, can make the unusual claim of knowing the exact date on which he stated playing guitar - April 29, 1976. He was highly influenced by bands such as Queen, Rush and Emerson, Lake & Palmer, but started taking guitar far more seriously after hearing Eddie Van Halen for the first time. He was named 1991 Guitarist of the Year by Britain's Guitarist magazine, and soon found himself gravitating toward progressive rock.

Kilminster (no relation to that other guy, by the way) joined virtuoso keyboard wizard Keith Emerson in a highly regarded reunion of Emerson's pre-ELP outfit, the Nice, and was a founding member of the subsequent Keith Emerson Band. He also formed Qango in 1999 with legendary King Crimson/U.K./Asia bassist and vocalist John Wetton. In addition to his voluminous work as a sideman, Kilminster's solo albums include *Playing With Fire* (1996) and *Scarlet* (2006).

As a guitar educator, Kilminster has taught at London's Guitar Institute, where he also wrote exam material and courses for Trinity College and Thames Valley University. When not on the road, he continues to teach at Guildford's Academy of Contemporary Music and is a featured instructor for Britain's acclaimed Guitar Break workshops. He has also made instructional DVDs for Rock Road's Lick Library and did television appearances on the instructional Killer Guitar series.

And as anybody who knows or has seen Dave Kilminster will tell you, the guy is just nuts about Fender Telecaster guitars (but we'll him explain that in just a minute). Suffice it to say for the moment that he's a big fan of the instrument. During a November break in the Roger Waters tour, Kilminster came up for air just long enough to check in with Fender News about the tour, his unabashed love for the Telecaster, the bright side of the Dark Side and what the real prog is these days ...

FN: You're regularly playing The Dark Side of the Moon in its entirety with Roger Waters. How on Earth (pardon the pun) does that feel? What's it like to share the stage with that guy on those songs?

DK: Very, very surreal. Roger's an amazing performer, it's a totally incredible show, and the audiences have just been astounding! The sound, the visuals, the other musicians - I feel incredibly privileged to be a part of such a magical experience.

FN: When playing the Floyd material, you must need to stick to the David Gilmour parts pretty faithfully. Are there places in those songs where you can assert your own musical identity?

DK: There are a couple of places where I have free reign, but, to be honest, I tend to stick fairly closely to the original parts. I always try and play with the greatest respect for the music, without letting my ego get in the way. I think that's probably what most of the audience want to hear anyway. And Floyd fans are not shy about making their opinions known!

FN: Ever feel compelled to use a Stratocaster guitar for any of that stuff?

DK: No; I feel very comfortable on a Tele, and there's not much whammy action during the set, so I thought I could probably get away with it. The Tele I'm using is borrowed from Richie Kotzen - one of his signature models with the series/parallel switch instead of the tone control, so you can get some really sweet, clean tones.

Gilmour has used a variety of guitars throughout his career anyway. I believe he started off with a Telecaster, which he used for Saucerful of Secrets; then there's his '55 Fender Esquire', the Les Paul - Gold Top with P90s that he used for his famous solo in 'Another Brick in the Wall, Part II,' and the Lewis 24-fret guitar he used for the solos in 'Money.' To be honest, I don't think it matters a great deal.

FN: You're quite the Telecaster fan. What is it about them that moves you so?

DK: Oh man, they're great! They're just so damn versatile. The first time I ever picked one up, it was almost like playing an acoustic. So resonant. Lush-sounding chords, great tones - just really musical-sounding. When I'm teaching at the ACM (Academy of Contemporary Music, Guildford), or recording for Guitar Techniques, I generally have to cover a wide variety of styles - jazz, funk, pop, reggae, grunge, country, blues, rock, fusion, metal, etc. And the Tele just does it all!

Before I discovered the Telecaster, I'd been using these custom-made, funny-shaped things with scalloped fingerboards, super-high-output humbuckers, louder paint jobs, Floyd tremos; but as soon as I picked up a Tele, I realized all the things I'd been missing.

FN: You've played with Waters, Keith Emerson, John Wetton and others who are (or were at some point) often grouped together under the prog umbrella. What's your impression of the current state of that branch of rock music?

DK: I haven't heard very much of the new stuff, but what I have heard I thought was totally dreadful! Most 'new' prog bands, to me, just sound like bad Genesis outtakes; almost like they're paying homage to their favorite bands without actually adding anything new to the genre. 'Prog' is supposedly 'progressive,' but I don't think prog bands have progressed much in the past 30 years. And the real progressive bands, like Radiohead, Rush, Muse, the Mars Volta, etc. don't actually fit under the 'progressive' banner. It's a pretty weird situation.

FN: Strangely, you remember the exact date on which you began playing guitar - April 29, 1976. What gives?

DK: There was nothing special about that day. I just became increasingly frustrated with not having a piano at home to practice on. Piano was my first musical love, and ever since then I've tried to play pianistic-type things on the guitar. Very frustrating! But it meant that I developed a few cool techniques on guitar that enabled me to perform most things that I wanted to play.

FN: Are you related to, you know, that one guy? And do you get tired of being asked?

DK: No, I'm not bored with it yet - ask me again next year, though! Lemmy actually has a different surname to mine though, as his is spelt 'Kilmister' without the 'n' I've seen it spelt both ways, but an ex-girlfriend of his reliably informs me that it's different to mine.

FN: So what's next for you in 2007?

DK: Well, we hit the road again mid-January, taking the Dark Side of the Moon tour to Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Mumbai (Bombay), Dubai, South America, Europe and hopefully North America again. It's going to be totally amazing! I also have a new solo album, called Scarlet, which I'll be selling on the tour, so hopefully I'll do a follow-up tour for that as soon as I get back in July. I just love to play!