

# Past Gear Steve Lukather

## Tour gear 2006

SteveLukather.com, July 2006

- 3 Custom Audio 2 x 12" Speaker Cabinets
- Ernie Ball Luke Guitar - Green
- Ernie Ball Luke Guitar - Blue
- Ernie Ball Luke Guitar - Red
- Ernie Ball Luke Guitar - Black sparkle
- Ovation Adamas, Acoustic Guitar, 6 string, Black
- Ovation Adamas, Acoustic Guitar, 6 string, Red
- Korg ToneWorks Tuner
- Furman PL-Pro Power Plus Supply
- VHT Power AMP - 62902
- VHT Power AMP - G2150-C
- Furman PL-Pro Power Plus Supply
- Crybaby EFX DCR-ISR
- Custom Audio 3 SE Tube Pre AMP
- 2 Lexicon EFX PCM-70
- TC Electronics EFX G-Force
- Line 6 EFX Mod Pro
- Custom Audio EFX GVCA-2 REV-3
- Custom Audio EFX Dual Stereo Mixer
- Custom Audio EFX Black Cat Vibe
- Custom Audio EFX Super Tremelo
- MXR Smart Gate Pro
- Custom Audio Patchbay
- 2 Custom Audio 4 x 4 Audio Control
- Boss Chromatic Tuner TU-2
- Custom Audio Midi FT Controller
- Boss FV-100 Pedal
- Crybaby Wah Pedal
- Heavy Teardrop Picks
- Ernie Ball Slinky Strings 9/42
- Ernie Ball Regular Slinky Acoustic Strings 12/54



MusicMan Luke guitar black sparkle



MusicMan Luke guitar blue sparkle



MusicMan Luke guitar green



MusicMan Luke guitar red sparkle



Ernie Ball e-guitar strings super slinky RPS9



Steve Lukather guitar picks



Ovation 6 string acoustic guitar



Ernie Ball acoustic guitar strings regular slinky



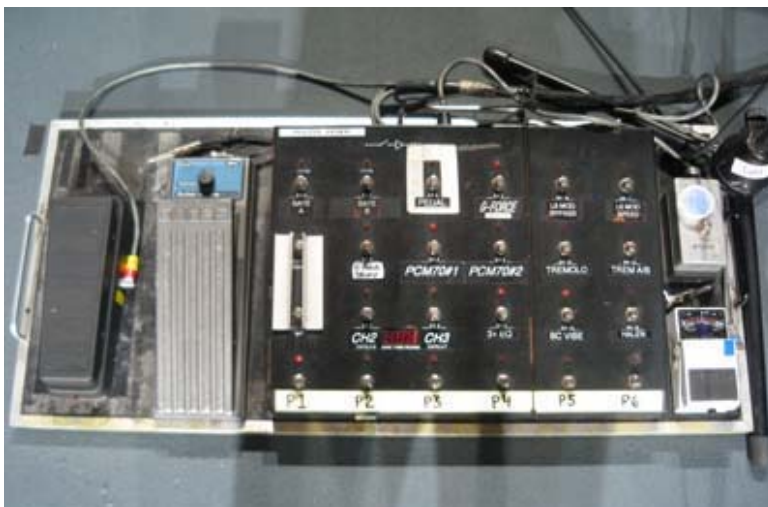
Ovation Adamas 6 string acoustic guitar



Custom Audio Amplifiers speaker cabinet



Custom Audio Amplifiers speaker cabinets



Pedal fx board



Rack 1



Rack 2 with wireless receivers

**Ernie Ball MusicMan Luke Dargie Delight** San Luis Obispo, California , USA,  
September 2006 © *Sterling Ball*



Luke: "Guys... the photo's do NOT do this gem justice!!!"

"This is THE coolest looking guitar!!"



"I dont have the adjectives to describe what this looks like in the sun."



"The birdseye is even, dare I say... nicer than the Flametop..."



"...which is a is whole other rave..."

**Steve Lukather's main guitars 1977-2004**  
Studio City, CA, USA, July 2004 © Steve Lukather



Gibson 1959 Les Paul Standard Sunburst



Valley Arts Robot



MusicMan Axis Luke Model, signed by Jeff Beck



MusicMan Luke Radiance Red





MusicMan Luke Black Pearl Old



Adamas SMT 1597-4G Unidirectional Carbon Fiber Top



Robot artwork by J. O'Conner (1985)



Luke's guitar collection from 1980. Left: Dick Gall.

## Steve Lukather Tour gear 2002/2003, January 2003

Pictures: Arend Slagman and Christian Tolle

Info sources: Steve Lukather, Geoff Banks, Clemens Bilan

Lukather (June 2001): "I'm afraid with any gear you won't sound like me, really even if you DID have the exact gear you wouldn't. People think it's the amp and guitar that get the sound... Well, it is not. It HELPS to have great gear but we all sound the same thru any gear. I have played thru EVH's amps, I played Jeff Becks Strats... I still sound like me playing thru their gear! Hahaha, that's the way it is. Just groove and sound like yourself and have FUN!!!"



Purple MusicMan "Luke" and Ovation-Adamas acoustic guitar.

Guitars: 2x MusicMan "Luke" electric guitars, black sparkle and purple. Ovation-Adamas 1597-4G acoustic guitar.

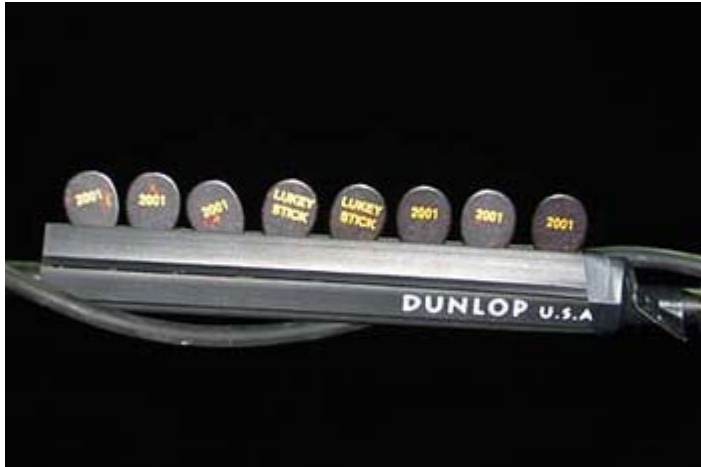
Strings electric guitar: Ernie Ball RPS Super Slinky 2239.

Lukather (December 2001): "The LUKE guitar stays in tune better now without the Floyd Rose. I have never had a problem and my guitars are STOCK... the same as everyone else. I can't say enough great stuff about MusicMan-Ernie Ball. Simply but... the very best there is out there today! If you DO have a problem call them and they will fix it."

Lukather (October 2001): "My guitar is exactly the same as yours. No "special" frills or anything. If I did that, it would be bullshit. I want you all to know that what I play you play. I LOVE these guitars so much. MusicMan is the BEST guitar I have ever played and I have them all, believe me.

Tunings... well I use different ones from time to time. Try drop D on the low E and the high E. It has a nice ring to it. I used this tuning a few times on the Luke album. There are many options. Try the Keith Richards tuning. Take the low E off the guitar and tune it G-D-G-B-D and you can play every Stones tune with the right voicings. Try it. You'll be standing on the table playing Start me up with a bottle of Jack and a hard on immediatly, hahaha!!!"

Lukather (July 2001): "My guitars are not limited to 999, but it made me laugh to think that. We have sold a LOT more than that already anyway. They are a fine guitar and I'm proud to play it and it's the SAME guitar you have, no extras for me. I could do the gig with your guitar and I wouldn't even notice, except for a little sweat in the fretboard."



Teardrop picks.

Lukather (November 2001): "I use small teardrop picks, smaller than my big thumb nail so I can use my fingers as well. I really don't think about it much. It's all in the hands and the heart... Sounds like bullshit but it's true. I sound like me no matter who's guitar or amp I use!"

Lukather (July 2002): "I get my picks thru MusicMan-Ernie Ball and they are a stock heavy jazz pick. I have silly things on them for every tour. I have used these since I was around 15-16 years old, along with just my fingers as well."



Pedal board.

Lukather (October 2002): "I do not use a fuzz tone. It's all #3 channel distortion. I DO have a custom tube screamer I use on special occasions but it's pretty much just the Bradshaw pre-amp!"

Lukather (April 2002): "I use a Roland keyboard volume pedal but it's pretty much whatever you like that feels good. The pedal is early in the chain so that when you fade out the delays keep going and you're not fading out your entire sound. You guys gotta understand, I am NOT a tech kinda guy. Bob Bradshaw designs all my stuff. He has since 1984. I am putting together a brand new rig as I write this. I tell him what I want and he does all the brain work to make it happen and he pretty much knows what I want."



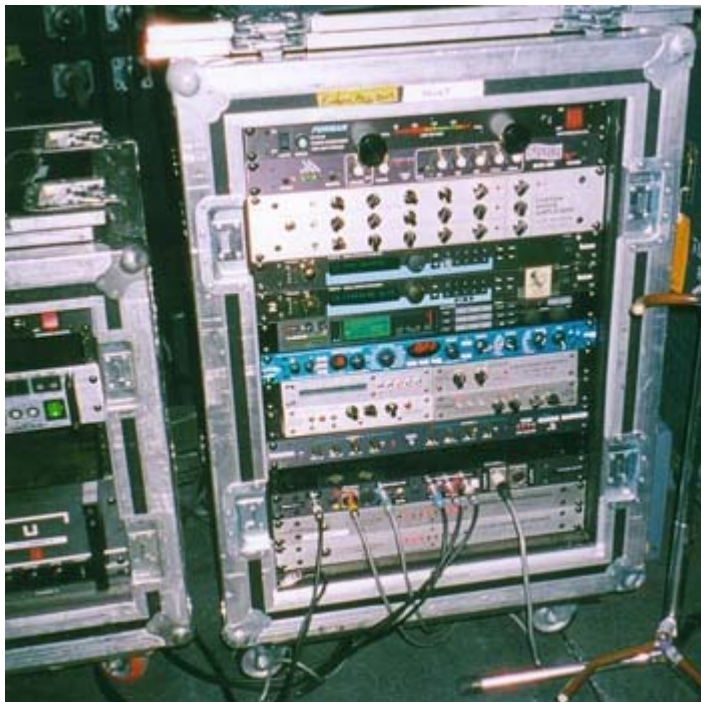
Amps and effects racks.

Amplifiers: the VHT classic power amp for the dry clean through the mid channel and the VHT stereo effects amp for the stereo effects through the left and right channels.

Pre-amp: Custom Audio Electronics 3+ (CAE 3+, Bob Bradshaw) with three sound switches: clean, dirty and very dirty.

CAE rack gear: guitar volume controller GVCA-2, dual stereo mini mixer, black cat vibe, super tremolo, two 4x4 audio controller, hush guitar silencer, Furman power conditioner.

Effects: 2x Lexicon PCM-70 delays, T.C. G-Force for the left and right wet channels (mid channel dry clean amp sound), Jim Dunlop rackmount wahwah, Line6 mod pro studio modeller.



Amps and effects racks.

Lukather (December 2002): "I use 2 vintage (at this point, hahaha) PCM 70 delay systems. I love the way they sound. Nothing else I have tried is quite the same. I use a pan delay and a

circular delay that are stock settings from 1985. Hard to find these days. I have a DRY signal in the middle and the 2 outside efx speakers."

Lukather (July 2002) "I went back to where I was with my gear circa 1990-91, but with subtle improvements. BRADSHAW baby! That pre-amp for me is better than the Rivera and was the sonic blue print for the Bonehead. I hadn't played thru my CAE-3+ in 5 years and when I plugged my Bradshaw in, it blew my mind. I then broke out my VHT power amps... and yes again... warmth, tone... I rest my case. I still have my PCM 70's... vintage now and some cool Line 6 stuff. Very small and compact and it sounds better than ever! I used this rig on my new Xmas record coming fall 2003. As for the new Toto record I used a stock 1/12 Marshall combo plugged direct and all EFX used are from the console. I did this for 2 reasons. One is to dispell the myth that my GEAR plays for me and not the other way around. Second I wanted to see just how many DIFFERENT sounds I could get with this simple amp and my most loved MusicMan guitars which are also stock. When you listen you be the judge."

Lukather (November 2001): "I EQ my amps with the mids pulled down a bit, a little + for highs, and a little + for lows. That's the simplest way to put it."



Speaker cabinets 2002.

Speaker cabinets: left and right cabinets for stereo (VHT stereo effects) sounds, centre cabinet for dry clean amp (VHT classic power) sound. According to Geoff Banks there are Peavy speakers in the cabinets.

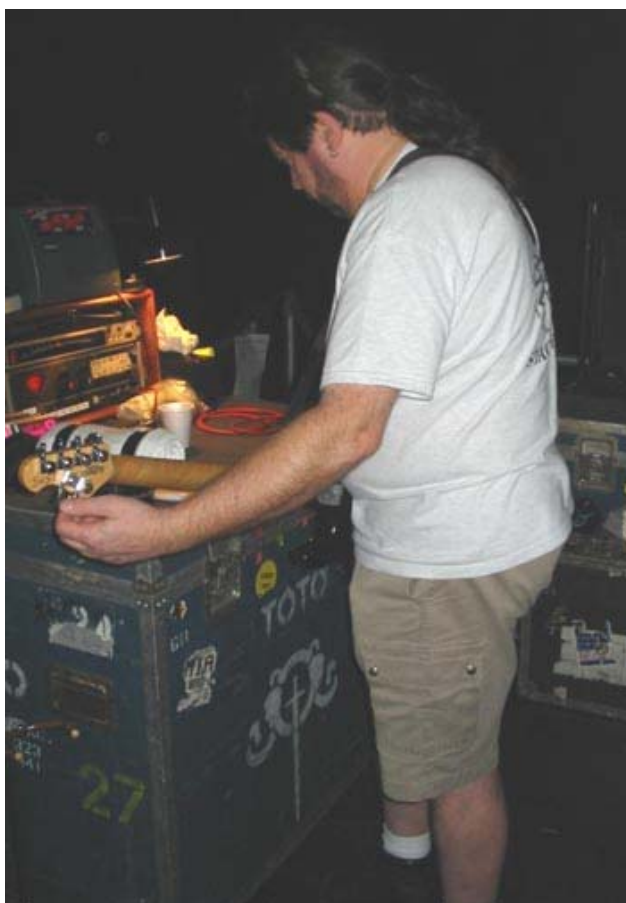
Microphones: 3x Shure KSM-32-studio-microphone.

Lukather (December 2002): "Right now I am using a set of 1 by 12's that Eddie Van Halen gave me. Not sure what speakers are in there but they sound really good. I JUST bought 3 pairs of Custom Audio Electronics speakers that Bob Bradshaw designed and they are KICKiNG! I will start using them on the Europe run starting in January 2003."



Speaker cabinets 2003.

Luke's new Custom Audio Electronics speaker cabinets that he started to use during the Europe Toto run in January 2003. The left and right cabinets for stereo (VHT stereo effects) sounds, the centre cabinet for dry clean amp (VHT classic power) sound.



Geoff Banks, "The Bison", Luke's technician in 2002.

Lukather (December 2002): "I have "the Bison" out with me now. He has done Jeff Beck, David Gilmour, Angus Young... love that!"

## **Steve Lukather MusicMan Luke**

Info source: Vintage Guitar, November 2000

As of 1994, Steve Lukather has an endorsement with MusicMan, an American guitar manufacturer. Before Music Man, Steve had an endorsement with Valley Arts guitars (Valley Arts Steve Lukather series), Ibanez (SL 10) and Fernandes. After Valley Arts were bought up by Koreans, Steve got in touch with MusicMan (based in San Luis Obispo, California) through his friend Eddie van Halen. Designer Dudley Gimpel (ex-Valley Arts) designed the MusicMan 'Luke' after Lukather's wishes.

Lukather: "After Valley Arts sold out, Sterling Ball became a close friend, and he approached me about doing a model. The other signature players involved with his company were world-class, and it turned out Dudley Gimpel, who designs MusicMan guitars, used to work for Valley Arts. I sent him my favorite Valley Arts neck, and he put it on a computer scanner, and made me a neck that was better."

"We tried different pickups, and worked on the shape of the body, but I really didn't have to do much because he sent me a world-class instrument right away. I kept going back to EMG pickups, and the final result was an unbelievably nice guitar that's very versatile - it can sound like a Strat or a Les Paul. And we keep developing it."

"I've always felt like if I had an instrument with my name on it, I'd have to want to play it all the time, and that's how I feel about this guitar. It can take a beating, and it stays in tune. The MusicMan company has actually asked me, 'What do you need' on more than one occasion; they've even made me a guitar with a piezo in it. I've never worked with a company that's more on top of what they're doing. They don't miss a beat."

**Ernie Ball MusicMan, The making of Luke**  
San Luis Obispo, California , USA, October 1998 © *Kaj Ringenier*



Tuning



Drying



Riping



## A Luke-ology by Matt Resnicoff, September 1988

Pictures: Glen La Ferman

Info source: Guitar World, September 1988



1: Built July 3rd, 1978, this cybernetic ax (VA Robot) is the first instrument McGuire crafted for Lukather. The originally tobacco-sunburst body is of mahogany, attached to a maple neck fitted with any ebony fretboard. Electronics by EMG.

2: On May 12th, 1984, Lukather walked out of the Valley Arts Guitar Center carrying this quilted birdseye maple sunburst, outfitted with EMG SASA pickups and a Floyd Rose vibrato system.

3: A sunburst Valley Arts from 1987, containing a Demeter preamp driven by Tom Anderson pickups. As on many of Lukather's guitars, intonation is maintained by Mike McGuire's use of an exclusive tall-but-narrow custom fret-wire design.

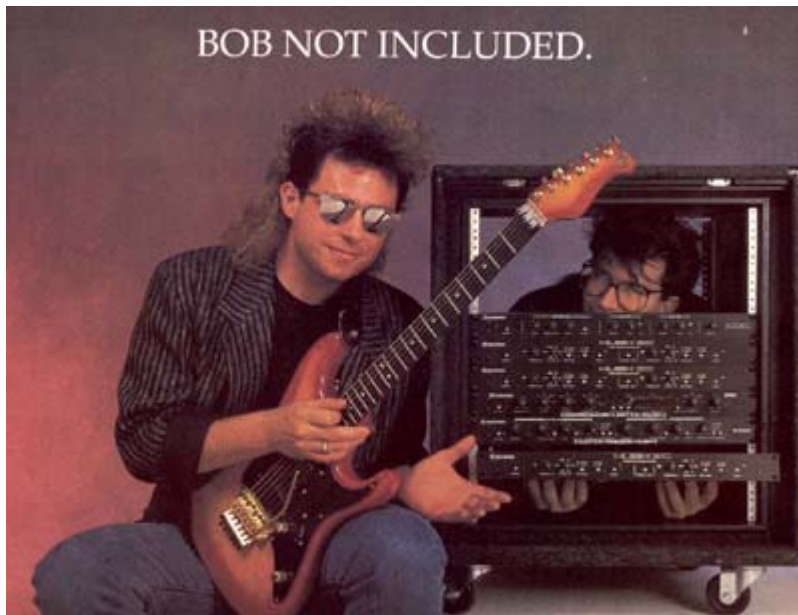
4: The rascal of the bunch: a 1987 James Tyler custom, with Tyler electronics and a Floyd Rose. The derivation of the moniker "Puffy" is, apparently, information reserved solely for the privileged.

For that characteristic Lukather punch and drive, Steve summons the specialized talents of master luthier Mike McGuire and electronics wizard Bob Bradshaw for his instruments and their processing. McGuire, who's crafted instruments and components for such musicians as Larry Carlton, Will Lee and Carlos Rios, enjoys a long-standing association with the guitarist. "I've known Mike McGuire since before puberty," reminisces Steve. "I used to go there and say, "[in child's voice] Hi, can I have some strings, please [laughs]?" I knew him. I pretty much let him put my guitars together; he'll ask me about the neck or pickups, and since he's so great at what he does, there's not a whole hell of a lot to say to the guy other than "Let's try this." I do the same thing with Bob Bradshaw. I say to these guys, "Give me your best shit, man, let's dig it," and they do, and they blow my mind [laughs]!"

"The success of his sound has a lot to do with the relationship between Mike and Steve," observes Martin Miranda, manager of the prestigious Valley Arts Guitar Center, where McGuire plies his wares in Studio City, California. "Steve is abstract about what he wants; he'll say something like, 'I need something with a little more "punch" or "drive,"' and Mike fashions his work based on that understanding between them. That's when we started using quilted maple for the bodies of Steve's guitars. It's not used just for its looks, but for its sound: warm, but with a full range, a very nice top end and a full attack. When Steve hits a note, he wants it right there." "We've experimented with a variety of pickups," Miranda continues. "Steve's very interested in rock, but since he came from doing so much studio work, he found that he had wider requirements. He'd go from a straight-ahead jazz session to one where he'd play a full-out rock solo, often in the same day. And because he's got such a broad base to his playing, he eventually got used to hearing things correctly, over big studio monitors, and consequently looked for a guitar to function with that kind of accuracy. We eventually fine-tuned his pickup configuration to include EMG's, which have proved rather versatile."

Steve runs his Valley Arts guitars through an effects system built by Bob Bradshaw, of whom Steve is perhaps the most vocal advocate in the industry. Apart from his sometimes-employment as the guitarist's road tech, Bradshaw serves as Lukather's chum, caretaker and confidant in a mutual trust based on technical risk-taking and reverse psychology. "I've had so many metamorphoses with my rig," Steve breathes with tinkerer's delight. "At first, when Mike Landau turned me on to Bob Bradshaw, I wanted to have the biggest rack, and I wanted it bigger than everybody else's, because, you know, I was young and ignorant, what can I say? And every year that passes, my rig gets smaller and smaller, and can do more and more. I've got all new amplifiers now: H&H power amps and some Soldano stuff, and I've added two

[Lexicon] PCM 70's and a [Roland] SRV-2000 as a reverb unit. I've also installed a Yamaha MIDI control programmer, which we've spent some late nights programming for the way I want to hear each song's delay time and reverb changes. [The remainder of Lukather's rig stands as illustrated in GW May 1988].



Rocktron add for the HUSH IIC, September 1988.

"I only use four pre-sets when I play live," Steve continues, "because I don't like to be stepping on buttons all night; as it is, I do a lot of that anyway. I have a clean rhythm sound, a crunch rhythm sound, a solo sound and one that has some over-the-top kinds of effects. That way, the configuration on the board is the same, and Bob just presses the button, changing the delay times and effects for every song; they're in time with the music, or there's a specific effect that comes in for one bar that Bob will punch in. He's got a remote for my pre-sets on the board, so I can be across the stage and he can go from my lead sound back to my rhythm sound. It's the first remote he's built; it's pretty Cool."

The Bradshaw rig performs well in fulfilling the sonic requirements of Toto's dynamic material, and provides a flexibility he wishes he might have enjoyed during his years of heavy session work, where speed and ease of set-up were almost as crucial as the sounds produced. "Well, that's the beauty of the system," he enthuses. "And by the time I started burning out doing sessions and just couldn't deal with it anymore, that's when Bob came along. The kind of material that my band does requires many sound changes, because we go through a lot of different moods, and I think it's essential to have those options at my fingertips, or my foottips. And we just got into the MIDI vibe, so I have every song in the set programmed. A lot of it has to do with the technology that's out there, but a guy like Bob Bradshaw, who is the finest in the world, just knows. You give him a challenge, and, like... when he goes to bed at night, he can't sleep because he's thinking about new ideas for systems or for my system or something, and he'll call me up the next day and say, 'Look, man, I've got this great idea, just let me fuck around with your stuff.' I say, 'Man, I would be happy to be your guinea pig for life.' I've never seen him come up with something that didn't work incredibly."

I really enjoy working with Bob, and I've learned a great deal. Before, I used to not really give a shit about my gear, because I didn't want to read manuals all day long; I just wanted to play. But he just says, 'Man, you've gotta get to know your gear, otherwise you won't be able to take it to its full potential. Why spend all this money on this stuff if you're not going to use it right?' So I had to go to school, so to speak, and I'm really glad that I did, because you get lazy when you get older. And I'm spoiled now; I'd rather play through a Bradshaw rig. It's me."



Steve Farris (Mr. Mister) and Steve Lukather introducing the Yamaha APX acoustic guitar, September 1988.

## Bob Bradshaw: Lukather's gear 1985-1987

customaudioelectronics.com © Bob Bradshaw

Bob Bradshaw (virtualguitarmagazine.com): "Mike (Landau) and Steve Lukather grew up together and were buddies, and Mike hipped me to Luke. I hooked up with Steve Lukather [in the] summer of 1984, and that's when things really started taking off. I worked and toured with them for years. From 1985 to, like, '90-'91, every show they did, I was there. I was custom-building rigs for other people, too. It took a few years to realize that there are certain building blocks that are the same in everybody's rig. Then MIDI came along. The system worked the same way but you also had MIDI program-change commands that would go out when you stepped on a preset to call up the different patches. While I was working out all of the switching stuff, I was dealing with levels and making sure that every device was seeing its proper level and impedance so that everything worked."



SteveLukather.com, February 2013

