



## DAVE HASKELL

### Wings and Strings

**P**lenty of improbable stories involve guitarists making first records amid peculiar circumstances. But few match Dave Haskell's journey to *Pivot Point*. A retired airline pilot who dallied in music professionally in the 1970s and '80s before turning his attention to flying, Haskell's trip started with his dad's interest in jazz – and the small airport next to their California home.

As fate (or luck) would have it, he grew up three blocks from the Ford family and was close friends of Mark Ford, harp playing little brother of Robben; as kids, he and Mark formed a band. "In the eighth grade, my parents bought me a Fender Princeton and an electric guitar."

While drawn to jazz, the Beatles, and the burgeoning garage-rock scene provided the real spark. Then, an encounter with the elder Ford got things rolling for his playing.

"I got a call that Robben needed to borrow my amp because his Bassman had blown up. I went to their rehearsal, and I'd never *heard* anything like that! He had a Guild Starfire and played lead like Bloomfield. It blew me away!"

Ford became one of his biggest influences. "I was mesmerized. He was the coolest thing ever, and even then was very gracious. He'd teach me things."

Ford plays on two cuts on *Pivot Point*. His former Yellow-jacket mates Russell Ferrante and Jimmy Haslip also appear; Haslip produced the record.

After the Ford family moved to San Francisco, so did Haskell, doing gigs and eventually taking a job with saxophonist Jim Pepper. He moved back to L.A. circa 1981 and performed in several bands, but by mid decade became disheartened.

"I'd been at it for a while, and always had a passion for airplanes. It was my ace in the hole. So I thought it was time to move on. It wasn't so much a defeat as another door that opened."

He eventually started working as a bush pilot in Alaska, to build flying hours. "I was still listening to [guitar music], but was focused on life and not playing much. But the fire never left. So, on nights off, I started playing a little guitar, and it turned on for me again."

In the late '90s, he was hired by a commuter airline, then by Continental. "I got to know where every guitar shop in the country was," he said of his travels. "I started getting more into it, and figured I'd been working hard enough that I deserved a \$700 Strat... but ended up buying a \$3,000 PRS!"

In retirement, he started writing songs again, then thought about recording. The guitar sounds on *Pivot Point* mostly come from a Heritage 535. The amp is his '66 Fender Super Reverb. "It's one of the best amps I've ever had. I like overdrive, but I like a more-compliant amp." Now, Haskell is simply waiting to see where playing takes him, and he formed a gigging band. "When I was 26, I dreamt about being where I am now. So this is all a bit surreal." – *John Heidt*

## Ask Zac

### WITH ZAC CHILDS

**I am a big fan of Hall & Oates, and G.E. Smith, and was wondering if you could tell me what Smith used in his stage rig with the band. Also, I was recently watching the video for the song "Family Man" and started wondering about the guitar sounds on the song. In particular, the stuttering sound in the song after the guitar part that sounds like octaves are being played. I can't tell if the stuttering part is a guitar or a synth. – Jamie King**

Smith's Hall & Oates guitar rig consisted of a '50s Tele, '60s Strat, 1960 three-pickup Les Paul Custom, '59 Les Paul, and a '62 ES-335. Amp-wise, he used a blond Bassman rig (as seen during his tenure as bandleader on "Saturday Night Live") in the U.S., while a pair of AC30s were used in Europe, and, in Japan, a Marshall head and cab. His only effect was a Boss CE-2 that was "set real low, and only turned on every once in a while." "Family Man" features both Smith and John Oates on guitar; the former played the octave part on a Telecaster and the solo on a Les Paul SG (with rare ebony-inlaid vibrato) into a Marshall 50-watt head and 2x12 blond Bassman cab.

Smith has said in interviews that many times in the studio they would set up instruments, then order food before recording. When the food arrived, G.E. would let the delivery guy choose which guitar and amp he thought Smith should use for the song. "It always worked!" he said.

According to Smith, the "stuttering" guitar part was played by Oates, then sampled into a Synclavier so it could be replicated identically every time it was repeated throughout the song.

*Zac Childs is a guitar tech in Nashville. If you have a question about guitars, anything from nuts and bolts to historical or celebrity-related inquiries, drop a line to him at [zac@askzac.com](mailto:zac@askzac.com) or visit [facebook.com/askzac](http://facebook.com/askzac).*