



# *Fender*

THE SOUND HEARD  
'ROUND THE WORLD

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**Richard R. Smith**

WITH FOREWORD BY  
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Master builder John English put together the selectively anodized and engraved aluminum-body "Aloha Stratocaster" for the 1994 NAMM show. Each knob has a Hawaiian scene under a clear top.

tuners for one customer, an 8-string Stratocaster for another. The shop also makes limited-edition instruments in production runs too small or complex for the main factory. Not satisfied with production-model vintage guitars, several customers have ordered Custom Shop versions. To fill these orders, the Custom Shop builders—some of Leo's biggest fans—work like archaeologists poring over old photos, examining old guitars, and re-creating an ancient technology: the tools, techniques, and materials Fender used in the 1950s.

As the Custom Shop expanded, the company hired a diverse collection of master builders including J. W. Black, Larry Brooks, John English, Yasuhiko Iwanade, Fred Stuart, Alan Hamel, Gene Baker, John Suhr, and Stephen Stern. The shop now measures 18,000 square

feet and production exceeds 4,000 guitars a year (counting almost five hundred unique ones). The Custom Shop's Signature Series features Clarence White, Albert Collins, Danny Gatton, and Jerry Donahue Telecasters. Stratocasters include the Dick Dale and Robert Cray models. The Set-Neck Series, which uses a set-neck joint developed by Steve Bolinger, includes a Stratocaster with a 22-fret ebony fingerboard and a highly figured book-matched top, a Telecaster with DiMarzio humbuckers, and the Telecoustic Custom with a piezo pickup system, Honduras mahogany back and sides, and a solid spruce top. The Classic Series takes designs kicking and screaming back to their neonatal beginnings with '54 and '60 Stratocasters, the Sparkle Telecaster, and Vintage Precision Custom Bass.