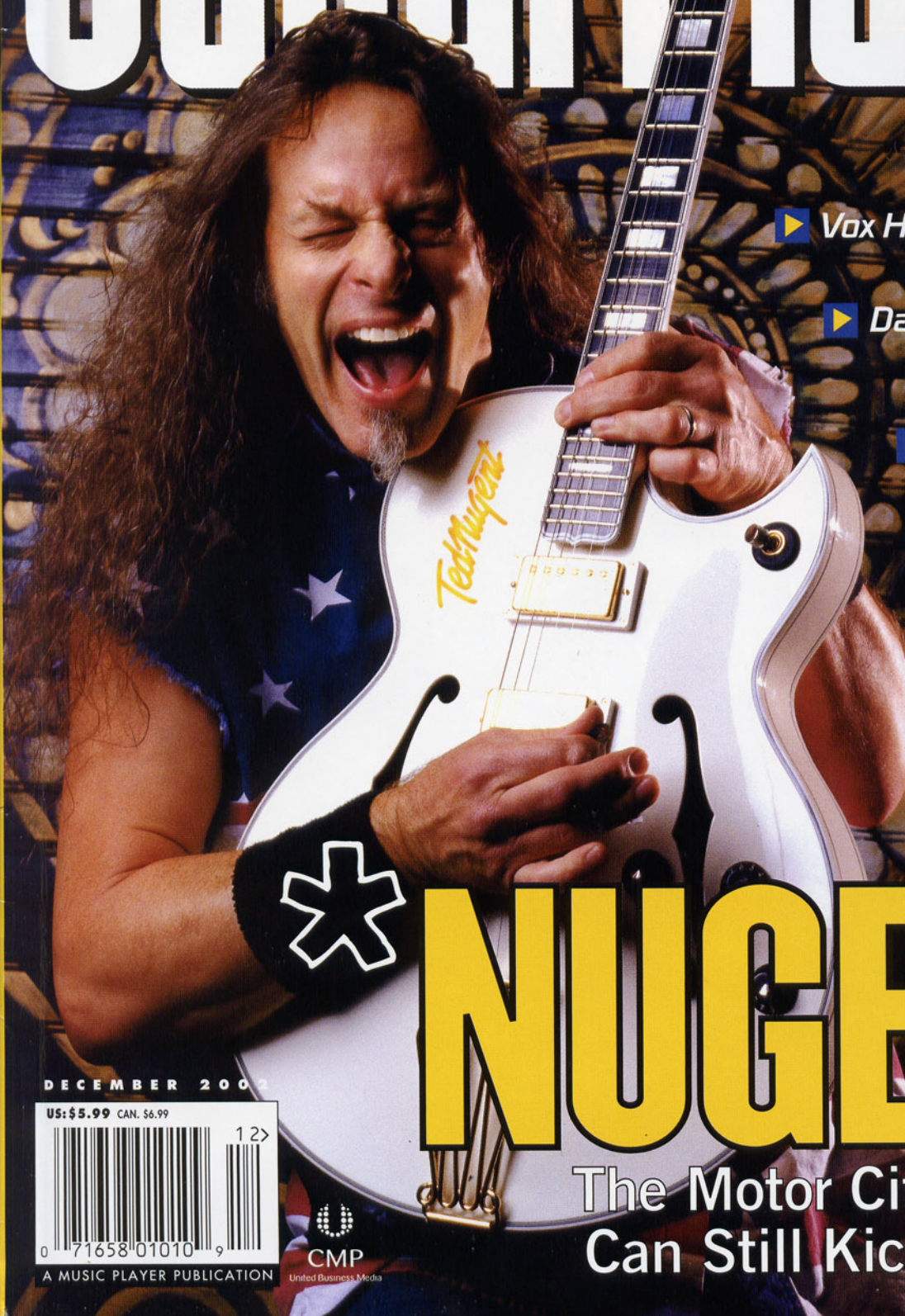


\* Coldplay \* Sean Watkins \* Steve Howe \* Bill Frisell

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# Gizmo Alert Z. Vex Lo-Fi Loop Junky

At first glimpse, the Lo-Fi Loop Junky might not seem particularly attractive, and I'm not referring to Vex's trademark psycho-delic paint job. This \$350 stompbox has fewer features than any recent looping device, and it sounds crappier than all of them. A lot crappier.

Are you still here? Good. Because if you're the sort of player whose ears perk to such adjectives as "crappy," "trashy," and "sleazy," you just may become addicted to this funky analog looper.

The Junky's loops are dull, hissy, and hyper-compressed. (Imagine the sound of a Lyndon Johnson-era cassette tape and you've got the idea.) The hiss level fluctuates according to the position of the record-level knob, but even under optimal settings, the Loop Junky pedal is noisy as hell. A dedicated tone knob lets you

dial in any color you like, so long as it falls somewhere between a little and a little *less* high end.

The pedal offers no sound-on-sound and no reverse playback—just a single 20-second sample. It can't store multiple loops, but it remembers a single loop for a long, long time. Or, as Zachary Vex puts it in his typically hilarious instructions: "If you unplug your cables, take out the battery, and bury it for a hundred years, the last loop you recorded will still be there when you drag yourself out of the grave and plug it in for the centennial resurrection gig."

One footswitch starts and ends the loop cycle, and another toggles the looped sound in and out of the signal path. A vibrato circuit with rate and depth controls adds extra wobble, evoking the sound of a warped 45 or a tape machine with moribund



motors. The wiring is true-bypass.

As true retro-delay aficionados will tell you, nothing conjures atmosphere like sonically degraded delays. That's one reason why just about any vintage echo fetches top dollar today, even though their tech specs are laughable by current standards. Similarly, the Loop Junky generates a worn, lived-in sound that can lend

instant atmosphere to a track. It's the same vibe that has elevated such no-fi keyboards as the Chamberlin and Optigan to cult status. The Loop Junky never sounds *good*, but it often sounds cool.

—JOE GORE

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