

Meet Your Maker

Words by Tim Slater

Trevor Wilkinson

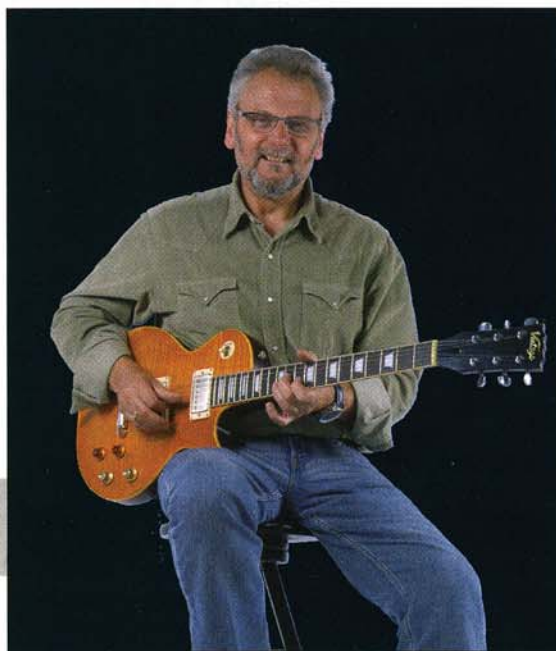
The ever-inventive UK guitar guru Trevor Wilkinson downs tools for ten minutes to chat with Playmusic Pickup about what makes him tick.

Trevor Wilkinson is living proof that boundless energy is not the soul preserve of youth. The 59 year old Brit is probably best-known as the man behind Fret-King guitars and the cheeky yet super-cool Vintage Icon guitars by JHS that put forward very affordable forms of faux vintage 'relic' guitars with stunningly realistic aged finishes.

A lack of cynicism and endless enthusiasm for – well seemingly just about everything he's into – are two qualities that mark Trev Wilkinson out as a guy ripe for interrogation in the Meet your Maker chair. To kick off we asked him why he puts so much time and hard work into designing guitars at the lower end of the market when he could justifiably focus purely on building the profile of his high-end custom shop Fret-Kings? "I enjoy what I'm doing. I'm

involved in projects that cost everything from a couple of hundred pounds, all the way to projects that cost several thousand pounds. A lot of people say to me, 'you've got Fret King guitars; why are you doing guitars that cost £149?' My response is that is that if you can't build a good guitar for £2000 pounds you shouldn't be doing it. The real challenge is to build something that can still be used on stage in front of hundreds or thousands of people that is affordable to everybody, including the entry level player.'

JHS' Vintage Icon series are probably the only low-cost guitars to enjoy the endorsement of professional guitarists. British session ace Geoff Whitehorn proudly wielded his £179 V6 onstage in front of thousands whilst backing the likes of Paul Rodgers and Roger Chapman.



Trevor Wilkinson does his best Peter Green impression

Trevor is at pains to point out that a player like Geoff Whitehorn could use any top-flight guitar that takes his fancy, yet he plays his V6 because he loves it, simple as that!

'Geoff Whitehorn couldn't go on stage with a guitar that doesn't work. Geoff has been playing a vintage V6 guitar on stage, with people the calibre of Procul Harum, that's with a £179 guitar!

Geoff's peers that he meets on the road are going 'wow! I can see that it's a great guitar' and they think he's joking when they find out what it costs. They then assume that it's a special model and they're staggered when Geoff turns round and says 'no, it's just out of the box!'"

"I have to say that we don't get many endorsements of that calibre in this industry. I don't believe that there's anybody else that's had that happen. Part and parcel is that we feel a satisfaction with what we are doing, I am so lucky. I work very, very hard but what I do is not hard work. I still think I've got something to say. I don't think I'm out of ideas, I'm certainly not out of drive and enthusiasm and that's why I love it. I made my living out of what other people consider to be a hobby."

"I'm not a great guitar player but I can play guitar. I still play in a local band, doing rock and roll and blues – the usual stuff that an old fart of 59 would normally do! We have a jam night every Wednesday up here at the Albert Hotel in Southport and it's amazing! We get kids coming up here who are 16 years old and they get up on stage and play Hey Joe and Cream numbers that I was playing that when I was 16, when it was current! Kids that can't possibly have known it from the beginning are

still into that music and they wanna play it! They don't want to do Kaiser Chiefs; they are getting up there and playing Peter Green! I couldn't have gone to a concert with my father and listened to the same music but today a grandfather and his grandson can go to a concert and listen to the same music. Music took such a giant step during the 60s that sometimes I think that we still haven't got past it." **PU**

