

COUCO AFRICAN
GUITARS



COURA

**AFRICAN
GUITARS**

the rebirth of the electric guitar in africa

All photographs -

- of the artists:
courtesy of the artists
- in Nairobi:
Isabel Gathoni Kinyanjui
- of guitars:
Thomas Röder

Lyrics: Agnes Scheithauer
and Peter Coura

Layout: Thomas Röder

WHY AFRICA ?

Almost all the music that is played today on electric guitar or electric bass would be unimaginable without the influence of African culture. Africa is not only the cradle of humankind, but also of handicrafts and the first musical instruments.

A large percentage of the wood necessary for building electric guitars grows here.

In the woodworking business, the proportion of manual craftsmanship is greater than in most other countries. African tonal sensitivity and responsiveness to sound is much closer to contemporary Western tastes. Or, to put it more accurately, during the last sixty years the tastes of the western, industrialized nations have been thoroughly permeated by African influences. i.e.: Blues, Reggae, Samba, Salsa, Soul, Gospel, Spiritual, Jazz, Rock, R&B, Hip Hop, Rap, Ska, Calypso etc. Because, through higher automation of production in the big companies, the emphasis is increasingly on quantity, the „Research & Development“ departments are no longer concerned with developing instruments further, but rather with optimizing the manufacturing process. Because there is no longer time for nor interest in developing a new generation of instruments, people turn instead to concepts such as „Replica“, or „Historic-Collection“. Here, an industrially produced guitar, designed to look like a model from 1959, for example, is treated with a Bunsen burner, cold spray, salt-water, and a heavy application of grime and sandpaper, to avoid the impression of mass production, and give it an apparently unique „Personality“. Nowadays, collectors and aficionados refer to this by the term ‚Mojo‘ (Soul). With the high proportion of skilled craftsmanship available in Africa it would be possible to guarantee ‚Mojo‘ for every guitar, without artificial ageing.

WHY US ?

We have been running the „Guitar Center“ in Frankfurt, Germany, since 1975. During this time we have amassed much valuable experience, and gained a widespread reputation amongst professional guitarists, for our shop, service-center and workshop. Here, we have built new instruments and/or restored vintage guitars for some national and international „guitar greats“. To name just a few, we have worked for:

John Abercrombie, Eberhard Weber, Ralph Towner, Michael Sagmeister, Leni Stern, Kai Eckhardt, Pat Metheny, Susan Weinert, Larry Coryell, Peter Maffay, Harvie Swartz, Bo Stiev, Peter Wölpl, Wolfgang Schmid, Accept, Marcus Deml, Steve Swallow etc..

In Nairobi / Kenya we found the right partner for our visions: Since 1973 the „SOS Childrens Villages“ are running - besides orphanages - a furniture Production Unit and a Technical School. Young Kenyans are meticulously trained here in woodworking by experienced master cabinet-makers. We taught their best craftsmen all secrets of making exceptional sounding instruments and recently put up a new workshop only for building our guitars and basses.

Our huge supply of excellent wood is not kiln-dried; it all has been dried slowly in the moderate climate of Nairobi for years and years (and nothing beats the sound of air-dried wood).



We don't have to age them; they have built in "Mojo" from the start.

The **MALINDI** Series I

P 90

To get this bluesy singing sound of heavy wood with a guitar, that doesn't break your neck, that wasn't just one of the goals in designing this model. The asymmetrical outline and the **"double-wedge-shaping"** leave enough wood, where it is needed for a blossoming sustain, and yet reduce the weight by 25%, compared to traditional forms.

The **"Rhythmclean"** control gently fades the neck-pickup from a warm, fat sound to a crisp and open twang. The bridge-pickup is placed a tiny bit further away from the bridge, to give you more dynamics and expression. Our own designed stainless steel **3-piece bridge** tops it all with a fast responding, yet never-ending "ring".



The Malindi Hybrid

is very much the same as the P90; the only difference is the matched humbucking pickup in the bridge position, which gives you this extra midrange punch for heavy distortion sounds.

Malindi Custom Art

It's not only the finish with the chalk-like painting in a traditional African way that makes the difference. The body of lightweight Mukango and the neck pickup with Alnico 5 pole pieces make for a very fast response and a brilliant attack. This is the sound you'll need for Reggae, Ska, Funk and – you've guessed it – African Music.

Specs	P 90	Hybrid	Custom Art
Body:	Mahogany	<- as P 90	Mukango
Neck:	Maple or Mahogany bolt on	<- as P 90	Maple
Fingerboard:	Rosewood or Ebony, 22 frets	<- as P 90	<- as P 90
Scale:	25 1/2 " / 647 mm	<- as P 90	<- as P 90
Bridge:	COURA 3-piece steel	<- as P 90	<- as P 90
Tuner:	Gotoh	<- as P 90	<- as P 90
Pick-ups:	2 x Häussel custom	1x Häussel P 90 1x Häussel HB	1x Häussel Alnico 5 1x Häussel Alnico 3
Controls:	Mastervolume MastertoneLC Rhythmclean PU Selector	<- as P 90	<- as P 90

Malindi P 90



Malindi Hybrid



the MALINDI Series II



Susan Weinert HB2

A thick, solid AAA-grade flame-Maple top adds sweet overtones to the warm bottom of the Mahogany body. Custom-made Häussel-pick-ups transmit every hue of this rich-colored sound. **Master-toneLC** and **SC-switch** make this guitar suitable for many different styles. Although it delivers a powerful sound, the Ebony-fingerboard, the Trem-block of steel and the asymmetrically shifted machine-heads keep it always in a distinguished balance.

Susan Weinert S3

We have built three guitars for this outstanding jazz- and fusion guitarist; this is the funky one. The body of White Afara, the bridge with a steel vibrato-block, the lightly scalloped ebony fingerboard make for a lively, almost acoustic response. Listen to Susan's last CDs, to get an idea how sensitive this guitar responds to her knowing touch. **Master-toneLC** and **HB-switch** extend the pallet towards a warm, fat lead-sound.

Malindi Junior

very much a P90 without a neck-pickup, but to make it an even more straight-forward guitar we added a bypass-switch. It connects the pickup right to the output-plug and gives you the option to switch from full blast to more decent sounds (or even to silence, if you like to play around with that on-off-scratcher-sound).

Malindi HB

You don't need a Trem, you don't want to pay extra for a spectacular flame maple top? All you need is the rich bottomed gutsy sound of a 2 humbucker guitar with a sustain never heard from a bolt-neck guitar? The quality of the Mahogany used for this instrument, the tonal balance of the circuit and the COURA 3-piece bridge combined with a long scale give you all this. Flip the SC-switch and turn this powerful lead guitar into a funky, yet warm rhythm-king.

Specs	Malindi SW HB2	HB	SW 3S	Junior
Body:	Mahogany w/Flame Maple top	Mahogany	White Afara	Mahogany
Neck:	Maple bolt on	Mahogany or Maple bolt on	Maple bolt on	Mahogany or Maple bolt on
Fingerboard:	Ebony, 22 frets	Ebony or Rosewood 22 frets	Ebony, 22 frets	Rosewood 22 frets
Scale:	24 3/4 " / 628 mm	25 1/2 " / 647 mm	25 1/2 " / 647 mm	25 1/2 " / 647 mm
Bridge:	Gotoh Vintage Trem steel block	COURA 3-piece steel	Gotoh Vintage Trem steel block	COURA 3-piece steel
Tuner:	Gotoh Magnum Lock	Gotoh	Gotoh Magnum Lock	Gotoh
Pick-ups:	2 x Häussel Custom	2 x Häussel Custom	Kinman or Häussel Truespace	1 x Häussel Custom
Controls:	Mastervolume Mastertone LC PU-Selector SC-Switch	Mastervolume Mastertone LC PU-Selector SC-Switch	Mastervolume Mastertone LC 5-Way-PU-Selector HB-Switch	Mastervolume Mastertone LC Bypass-Switch



Malindi Junior



the **MALINDI** Series II

Susan Weinert HB2



Malindi HB



Malindi S3



the MASAIMARA



"Once a COURA, always a COURA"
Michael Sagmeister

Specs	Masaimara Jazz
Body:	Mvuli
Neck:	Maple thru body
Fingerboard:	Ebony, 22 frets
Scale:	24 3/4" / 628 mm
Bridge:	Schaller
Tuner:	Gotoh or Schaller
Pick-ups:	1 x Häussel Classic Custom 1 x Realizer-Sensor
Controls:	Mastervolume MastertoneLC Dual-sound-switch

Our oldest design, developed in 1981 and for a very good reason never changed. This is the first time we used a Kenyan wood called "Mvuli". It combines the sweet sustaining sound of a Mahogany / Maple solid-body-guitar in the treble register with the clear, distinguished attack of a semi-acoustic in the lower range. This guitar still sounds jazzy even at high volumes, when a traditional semi-acoustic squeaks like Ted Nugent. The wider body fits snug onto your body, whether sitting or standing up, while the neck-through-design gives you the smoothest access to the high notes. Since the Mvuli-wood has such a great acoustic response, we decided to add a Realizer- sensor.

Specs	Masaimara Fusion
Body:	Black Afara
Neck:	Maple thru body
Fingerboard:	Ebony, 22 frets
Scale:	24 3/4" / 628 mm
Bridge:	Schaller
Tuner:	Gotoh or Schaller
Pick-ups:	1 x Häussel Classic, 1 x Häussel Tozz, 1 x Realizer-Sensor
Controls:	PU-Selector, Mastervolume, MastertoneLC, SC-Switch

Newest addition to the Masaimara range is the „**John Abercrombie Signature**“.

We use Aningeria Altissima for the sides. This wood is lighter and has an even faster response than Mvuli. Unfortunately it is very hard to find a good quality, and so only a few are built each year.

It's only expensive until

Specs	Masaimara "John Abercrombie"
Body:	Aningeria altissima
Neck:	Flame Maple
Fingerboard:	Ebony
Scale:	24 3/4" / 628 mm or 25 9/16" / 650 mm
Tuner:	Gotoh or Schaller
Pick-ups:	2 x Häussel Custom 1 x Realizer-Sensor
Controls:	Mastervolume ToneLC neck Tone bridge PU-Selector SC-switch



the MASAIMARA



Masaimara Jazz

you try it!



John Abercrombie
Signature



What they say:

" it really sounds like an archtop... it has this very special acoustic touch that hardcore jazz-guitarists cannot do without – and now they can get this from a solidbody without any feedback In any case, this sounds a lot more acoustic than all common semi-acoustic guitars and so it's the ultimate choice for jazz-guitarists, who have to play in a loud band."

Heinz Rebellius
(in „Gitarre & Bass“)



Masaimara Fusion





What is so special about the

Double-Wedge-Shaping and the double endpin

1. The treble side of the body is thicker than the bass side.
2. The rear (endpin-) side is thicker than the front (towards the neck)

This basic shape allows a very comfortable handling, whether you play standing up as well as seated. Besides it eliminates any tendency of being top-heavy.

Experience

Repairing, customizing and building guitars and basses for more than 30 years gives us the knowledge needed. There is no school that teaches better than life.

People

Every instrument is made by just three dedicated, skilled and open-minded workers; one for the woodwork, who signs the body, one for the finish, and one for the assembly and final set-up, who puts his sign of approval on the cover of the electronic compartment. You'll always know: "Who's dunnit?"

Wood

As said before: Nothing sounds better than air-dried wood!

Artists

We owe them more than a big thank you for playing our guitars and basses. They are the ones who make it all worthwhile, often criticizing, sometimes praising and finally breaking it down to the essence of it all by playing the music that makes us happy.



The double endpin is just a small example of how we try to make your life easier:

1. We all know, a guitar is to be put on a guitar-stand. But in real life? At least, this way it's a little bit safer.

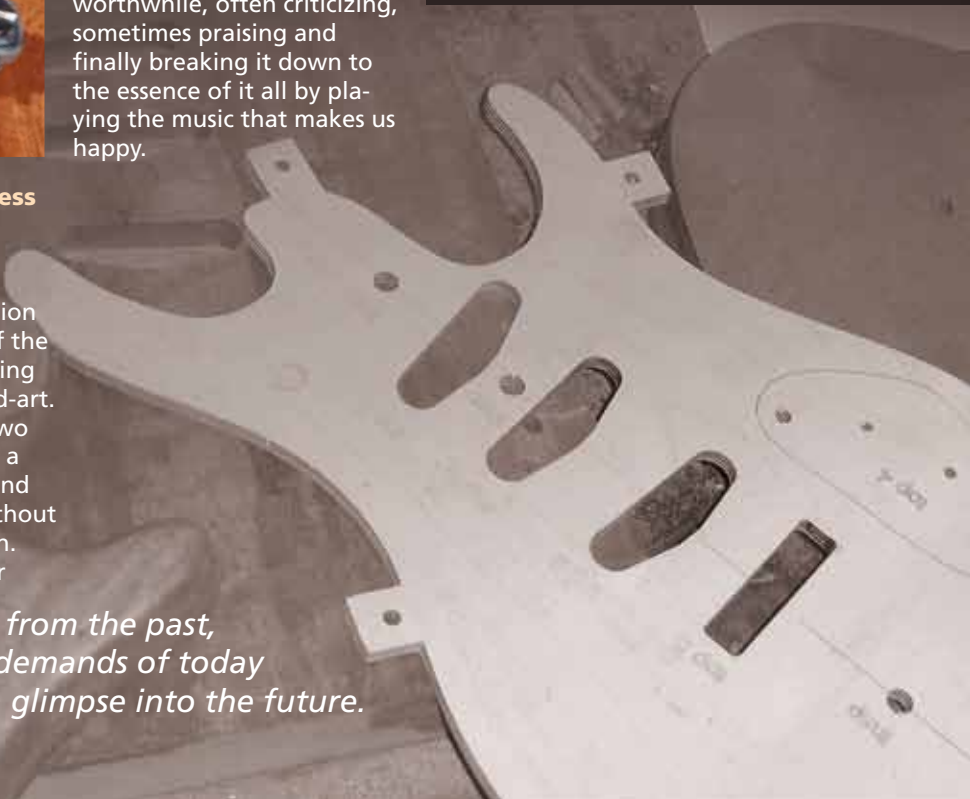
2. Between the 2nd and the 3rd set of a concert it sometimes gets a little warm. You take of your classy jacket and try to look cool in a smashing sleeveless t-shirt. But now your guitar is hanging those important 4 inches lower. Just fix your strap to the lower endpin and everything feels right.

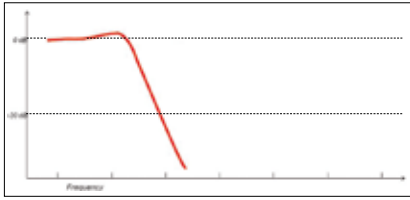


The COURA 3-piece stainless steel bridge

The true and undampened transmission of string-vibration into the wood is only one of the advantages of this outstanding custom-made piece of sound-art. Material and shape of the two adjustable saddles make for a long sustain and yet a fast and ringing response, all this without sacrificing a good intonation. This is a sample to prove our motto:

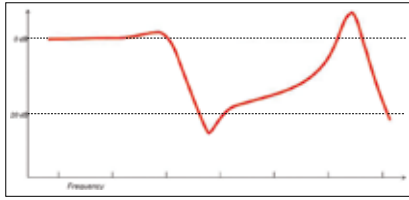
*Learning from the past,
recognizing the demands of today
and daring a glimpse into the future.*





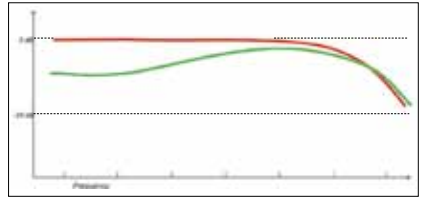
Tone Control

When asked about the tone-control, new customers often reply: „I never touch it“. Here’s the reason why: Common tone controls use a potentiometer and a capacitor to cut off highs. With the control turned down, everything above ca. 300 Hz is “dead”. Right below this cutoff-frequency there is a slight boost. The effect is: the guitar sounds dull and muffled. After trying our



MastertoneLC,

many players say: „I can’t take my hand off it!“ It takes a lot more to get a usable Tone Control. We take the effort of fine-tuning every single guitar, until we and our customers are happy. With our unique passive circuit we can soften the tone by dampening the high mids, but leaving some overtones to give it a mellow, yet silky quality. To add that extra bit we shift the frequency-boost to a region where we, our customers and their amplifiers like it. A typical frequency response could look like above.



The **Rhythmclean**-control is used on the guitars with a P90 in the neck-position. We like this pickup in a slightly overwound version to give it a really round bottom for fat or mellow solo-lines. To clean it up to a sparkling rhythm-tone this control smoothly dampens the low end. It only affects the neck-pickup, so you can adjust a perfect blend of both pickups to match your style of music.



HB-Switch

In some of our single-coil-guitars we use the HB-switch. It connects 2 single-coil pickups in series as one humbucker, bypassing the pickup-selector switch. Now you can change from any single-coil sound to a fatter humbucking sound by the flick of one switch.

Offset headstock

The combination of headstock-angle and off-set tuners add “twang” to the bass and “fat” to the treble (very much like a reverse-head, but looking better!).

SC-Switch

Instead of switching the pickups one by one to single-coil mode we use a preselection-switch. Whatever humbuckingsound you select with the PU-selector-switch – one flick of the SC-switch changes to a parallel connection of the inner coils of both humbuckers, giving you that funky “inbetween-sound” with just the right loss of volume, but without the hum. Just another flick on the SC-switch puts you back to your previous Humbucker-sound.

Put the sound of wood back into your electric guitar!

Electromagnetic pickups transduce just the vibration of the strings. Wouldn’t it be nice to send the sound of the vibrating wood of your guitar to the amp as well? For this purpose we developed the **RealizeR**. A small sensor is installed into the guitar, which picks up only the sound of wood, not the string-vibration.

In the outboard **RealizeR** this signal is processed and added to the sound of the magnetic pickup. There is no overlapping of the frequency ranges and therefore no phasing problem.

The electromagnetic sound is in no way altered; there is no active electronic or battery inside the guitar. All you have to do: use a stereo-cable to connect the **RealizeR** with your guitar and off you go to an exciting new sound-sphere. The output of the **RealizeR** gives you the choice of a mono-blend of the two sounds or two discreet signals for recording or further processing. (Without **RealizeR** and using a mono-cable the guitar acts like a „normal“ electric guitar).



the MALINDI „almost fretless“ bass

You need the „thump“ in the low register and still want the cello-like voice, singing out a jazzy solo-line? Try our „almost fretless“ with an ebony fingerboard, that is above the 12th fret raised by exact the height of the frets. This not only gives you the true fretless feel in the upper octave, it also blends the sound smoothly from fretted to fretless. This feature is available on all our basses, 4- or 5-string, with any pickup-configuration.

Wiring and switching

All basses are available with passive or active circuits. Active circuits are made by Noll or Glockenklang and offer a bypass switch and an additional passive tonecontrol. The passive version is custom tailored to meet the needs (and equipment) of the future owner.

The massive-passive EQ

The 3-pickup basses like the „Kai Eckhardt Signature“ are equipped with individually tuned circuits for each pickup. Furthermore, you can - with an internal switch - raise or lower the cut-off frequency by half an octave, a real problem-solver, if you have to switch from a 2x10“ to 1x15“ speaker.

Specs Malindi „Kai Eckhardt Signature“ bass

Body:	White Ash
Neck:	Flame Maple
Fingerboard:	Ebony
Scale:	35 1/32" / 890 mm
Tuner:	Gotoh
Pick-ups:	3 x Häussel JB
Controls:	Mastervolume Massive-Passive EQ 5-way PU-Selector HB-switch

Peter Coura
jamming with Kenyan singer
grandpa Kinyanjui



Malindi fretless bass

We combined a body of White Afara, which gives an almost acoustic response, with a top of flame-maple, a maple neck, and an extra thick ebony fingerboard to achieve this singing fretless-sound. The 4-way-switch connects the two custom-made Häussel-pickups single, parallel or in series. Master volume-, treble- and bass-controls complete the passive (of course) electronics.

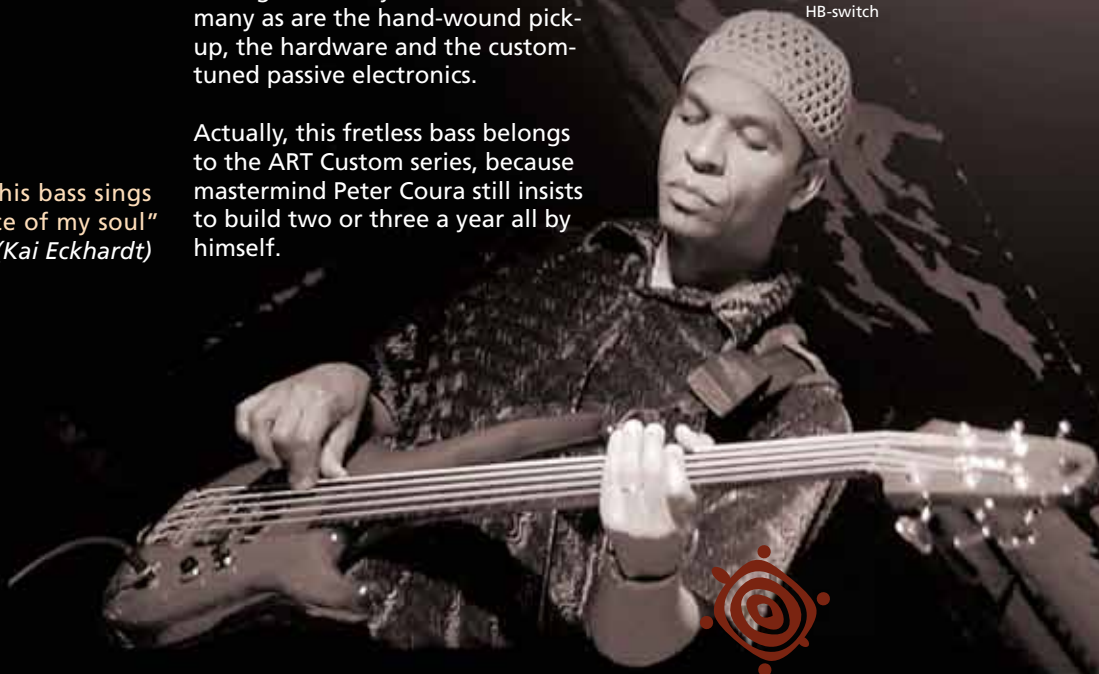
Specs	Malindi fretless
Body:	White Afara
Top:	Flame Maple
Neck:	Maple
Fingerboard:	Ebony with fretlines
Scale:	33 7/8" / 860 mm
Bridge:	Kahler
Pick-ups:	2 x Häussel JB Custom or 1 x Häussel Soapbar
Controls:	passive, 4-Way-Switch Volume, Treble, Bass Optional with Noll active 2-band circuit

the BURU BURU fretless bass

From Africa are the ebony fingerboard and the body-wings of Black Afara. The Flame-Maple-neck goes through the body and is from Germany as are the hand-wound pickup, the hardware and the custom-tuned passive electronics.

Actually, this fretless bass belongs to the ART Custom series, because mastermind Peter Coura still insists to build two or three a year all by himself.

„This bass sings
like the voice of my soul“
(Kai Eckhardt)



Malindi fretless



Malindi
Kai Eckhardt Signature



Malindi
"almost fretless"



The Aberdare

At first look this is the modern SSH type of guitar that is so very popular for its versatility. But we even increased the handling and the sound by using our double-wedge shaping, adding more substance to the treble strings and keeping the bass strings from sounding muddy. Add the tonal quality of perfectly matched pickups and a very musical tone control, and you know why artists like Marcus Deml ("one of the three leading guitar heroes of our times", as the "guitar player" wrote) choose this guitar as one of three to take to a secluded island.

The Kidege

Kidege is Swahili and means "little bird". The semi-solid construction is light as a feather and its high-timbered voice seems to be coming from a tree-top. A special designed neodymium neck-pickup and two coils in the bridge position are selected as three individual pickups by a 5 way switch, delivering five distinctive sounds, each with a different hue of sparkle. But with a flip of the HB-switch this little bird turns into an elephant, putting out lead lines with an almost hornlike sound.

Specs	Aberdare	Kidege
Body:	Lightweight White Ash	Mukangu semi-solid
Top:	Figured African wood	solid Mukango
Neck:	Maple or Flame Maple	Maple
Fingerboard:	Ebony, Maple or Rosewood 22 frets	Maple, 22 frets
Scale:	647 mm / 25½ inch	647 mm / 25½ inch
Bridge:	Gotoh Vintage Trem w. steel block	Non Trem string-thru-body
Tuner:	Gotoh Magnum Lock	Gotoh
Pick-ups:	2 x Häussel Custom Singlecoil 1 x Häussel HB	1 x Coura silksound P90 1 x Häussel Tozz XL
Controls:	Mastervolume Mastertone LC 5-way-switch	Mastervolume Mastertone LC 5-way-switch HB-switch



Marcus Deml

& KIDEGE

Kidege



Aberdare
Art Custom



Aberdare SSH



Aberdare HB



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A very special thank you goes to our favorite artists:

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Susan Weinert



Rolf Bussalb



Christian Lauterbach



Kai Eckhardt



Wolfgang Schmid



Leni Stern



John Abercrombie



Ken Taylor

