

Whatever happened to...

DAVE MASON

NOW Not surprisingly, Dave Mason is on the road, a place he's been almost constantly since the '60s—that is, when he's not busy being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a founding member of Traffic. But despite the honor, he says it didn't mean a thing to his current career. "I have a new record finished, and I don't know when it will come out, because the state of the music business is worse than it's ever been," says Mason. "Everybody's stealing with the Internet. Everybody likes to fluff it up and call it 'file sharing,' but I like to call it what it is."

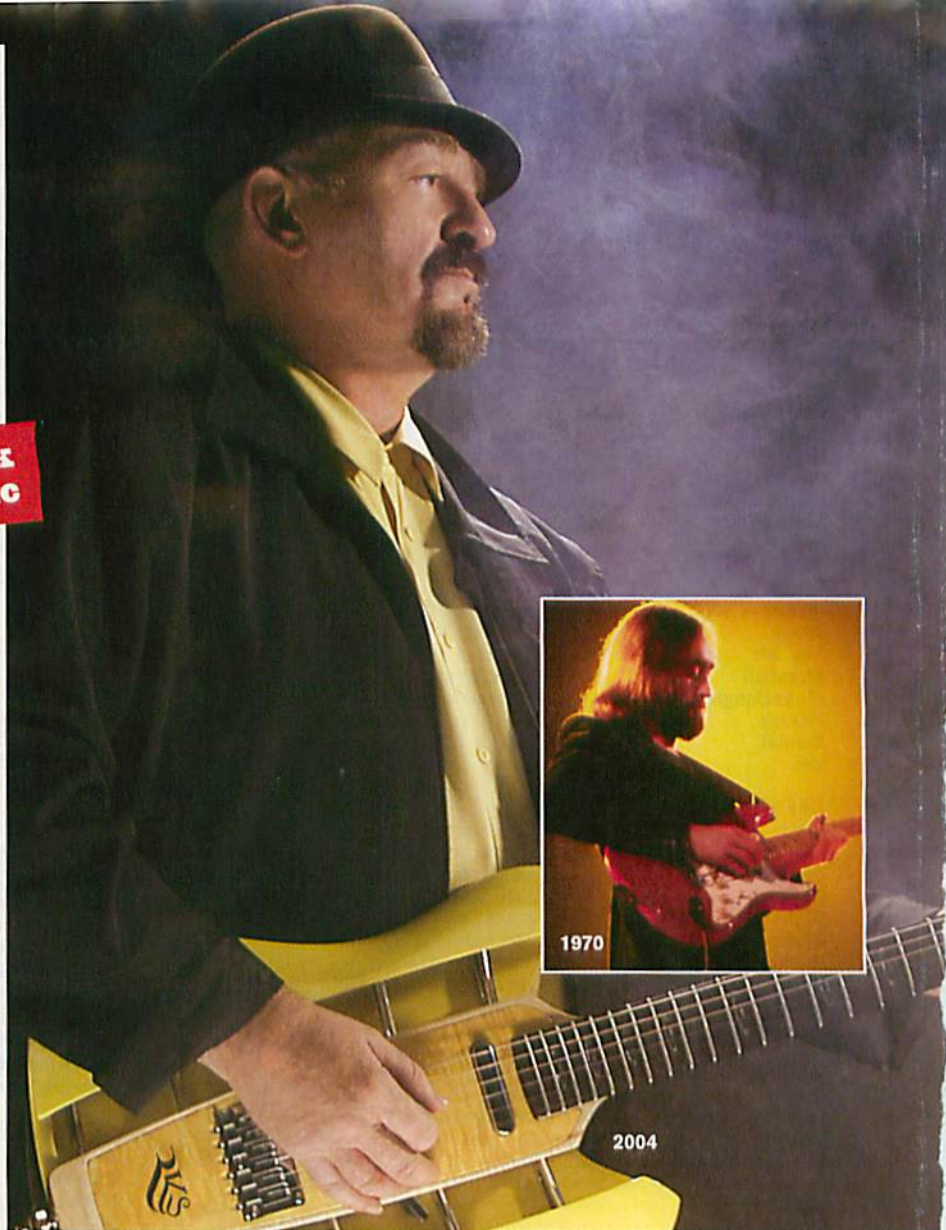
Not Stuck in Traffic

That said, the 58-year-old Mason, who feels he's just hitting his "musical peak," still boasts a massive and loyal fan base. He's also exploring other creative areas, most notably with RKS, his guitar company. "That's what's most important to me now," he says. "My partner, Ravi K. Sawhney"—hence, RKS Guitars—"owns an industrial design company, and I've spent three years working with them on guitars, as the guy going, 'Not yet, take it back.' We wanted a really functional form, something a professional guitar player would want to play, and, at the same time, a design that was somewhat revolutionary but not too bizarre."

THEN "When I first started out, I played instrumental music," Mason recalls. "And in order to get bookings, I had to learn the popular songs of the time. So I learned to sing, and went from there." By age 18, the Worcester, England, native had formed Traffic, and at 19 he penned the classic "Feelin' Alright," which has been covered by more than 300 artists. In 1969, Dave hit the States for a solo career, and in 1970 scored big with *Alone Together*.

Mason also played bass on the seminal Traffic tune "Dear Mr. Fantasy," and though he hasn't picked up a four-string in 30 years, Hendrix once considered enlisting the Brit as his bassist. "There was a period of time where there was unrest in Jimi's band," says Mason. "Noel Redding was going to leave, and I was going to join. Years later, I learned that his management had nixed it." What did he learn from Hendrix? "I learned I'd better practice hard! The first time I saw him I figured it was time to look for another instrument to play—maybe tambourine, or flute. A lot of the effects used today, they had to actually *create* for him. Anyway, I did sing the background vocals on 'Crosstown Traffic,' and I played bass and sitar on other tracks we did, but I have no idea where they are; I haven't heard them since!"

—KATHERINE TURMAN



1970

2004

LOST LICKS "All Along the Watchtower" From Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland* (MCA)

"I played acoustic guitar on Hendrix's version. I remember Jimi and I hearing Bob Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* one night—everyone wanted to hear that album when it first came out. This song came on, and Jimi said, 'Oh, man, this is cool, we have to do this tune!' So he and I and Mitch Mitchell went into Olympic Studios in London a few days later and cut it. I mean, I was just happy to be doing *anything* with the guy! Jimi and I were sitting opposite each other—he was playing acoustic, too—and the two of us played to Mitch. Then Jimi did the bass on it, and all his guitar work over that. His version is fucking great. Of course, Eddie Kramer was producing that session, but it's all Jimi; he knew what he wanted. For me now, this is the only tune I can guarantee will be requested at every show of mine. But my version is not like his—it's more straight-ahead."

Tune down 1/2 step:
(low to high) E₅-A₅-D₅-G₅-B₅-E₆

Intro
Moderate Rock ♩ = 116
B C#m B A B C#m

Gtr. I (12-str. acous.)
mf

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