

# In Our Systems

## This Month in DVDs, Video, and Books

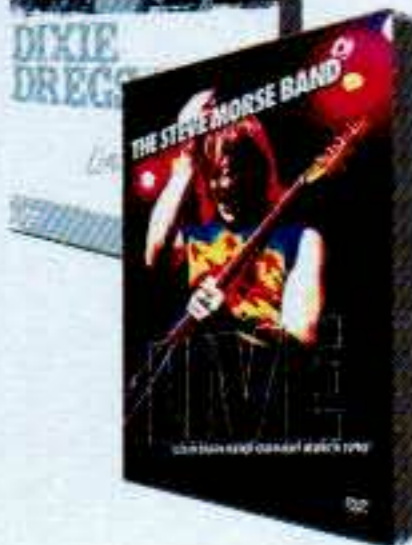


**Dixie Dregs**  
**Live at Montreaux 1978** (Eagle)

**Steve Morse**  
**Live in Baden-Baden Germany March 1990** (Eagle)

Inspired by the jazz-fusion of the '70s, Dixie Dregs rewrote the rulebook for what could actually be "fused" in fusion. Melding rhythmic jazz complications onto insane bluegrass, dizzying prog rock, and intricate roots mannerisms, they revolutionized instrumental music and became one of those mind-bendingly talented ensembles that fans loved and other musicians hated. Back in 1978, when the Dregs' set was filmed, the band was nearing its peak, with a perfect balance of passion and precision. They play the most intricate patterns, like those found in "Leprechaun Promenade," the Zappa-esque "Country House Shuffle," and the bizarre funk romp "Night of the Living Dregs" with nauseating facility. Bonus points for including the hideous post-"Dixie" phase of the band "Crank It Up," which appeared on TV's "American Bandstand." Like any trailblazer, the Dregs never earned the credit they deserved. But their band members remained active. Steve Morse went on to serve stints in Kansas and Deep Purple before embarking on a solo career.

More streamlined than the Dregs, Morse stepped into a spotlight that illuminated his own guitar-centric material. In addition to a great set from 1990, this new DVD serves up a bonus mini-set from 1984 that nicely illustrates the transitional sound he had between the old Dixie Dregs and his better-known solo work like *High Tension Wires*.



**Stryper**  
**Greatest Hits Live in Puerto Rico**  
(MVDvisual)

Over the years, holy metal titans Stryper have peeled away the shroud to reveal the Christian animal underneath and their evolving candor, demonstrating loyalty to their spiritual roots, has given them strength. This DVD, their first ever, was recorded back in 2004. It's not as visually crisp as it should be and the sound doesn't pop, especially on Robert Sweet's tinny drums. But Oz Fox, one of the original LA hair metal guitar heroes—sorry, but it's hard to imagine this band on the Sunset Strip during the hair metal heyday—still cranks it pretty well, giving the Stryper sound a solid power chord foundation. And crooner Michael "Calling on You" Sweet, second only to Steve Perry in the rock-crooner category, still hits those high notes, and even nails a few PRS-powered solos as on the impressive "Free."



**Dinosaur Jr.**  
**Live in the Middle East**  
(Image)

The sight of J Mascis, Lou Barlow, and Murph together on a stage is enough to send primitive alt-rockers like myself into a narcotic trance; hearing them blow through a set of Dino Jr.'s classic early-period stuff is like drinking from the fountain of youth. Mascis and Barlow's falling out snuffed any hopes that either had of making inroads deeper into the '90s, and you can see why here—in a couple different gigs—as they roar together. Mascis is a brutal, intuitive guitar hero, way more Neil Young than Steve Morse, held back only by his stiff, neutral stage persona. Barlow crushes on bass, clearly inspired by the old stuff ("Freak Scene," "Repulsion," "Chunks"), which, incidentally, sounds as brilliant and ragged as it ever did. It won't turn on many new fans, but it sure makes the old ones pretty damn happy. —BOB GULLA

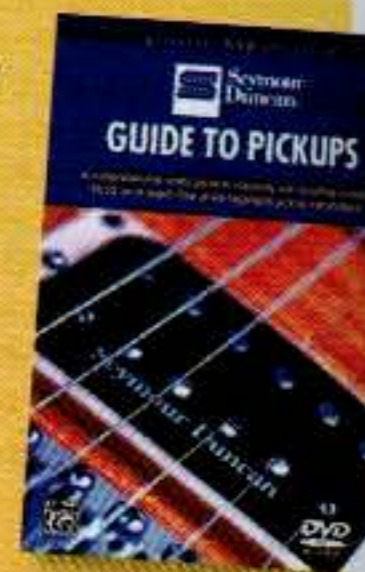


## INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS OF THE MONTH

**Paul Gilbert: Terrifying Guitar Trip** (Alfred) is a straight-up DVD reissue of a 1995 VHS release that's well worth a second (or tenth) viewing. The licks themselves are impressive enough—there's loads of daredevil string-skipping and two-handed virtuosity to drool over—but Gilbert's famed odd-ball humor is the real deal-clincher. He plays every example on an Ibanez festooned with white cowboy jacket-style fringe on its neck and body, while sitting in front of a video-screen backdrop that shows, at various times, a close-up of peppers being sautéed in a pan, a large plate of sushi, and wontons frying. What does any of this have to do with the guitar? Not much, but it's definitely amusing.



If you're looking for something less wacky and more informative, there's always **The Seymour Duncan Guide to Pickups** (Alfred). By the end of this 95-minute educational extravaganza, hosted by Duncan's VP of marketing Evan Skopp, you'll know everything you wish to know about resonance peaks, coil-tapping, and polarity reversal—possibly even more than you wish to know. Those of you thinking about doing some DIY pickup replacement are strongly advised to check out the segment in which Duncan, the magnet guru himself, takes viewers step by step through the removal and installation process. —MAC RANDALL



## BOOKS

"Heavy metal is about as close to the blues as you are to the first mud-skipping fish that crawled out of a cretaceous bog." So writes Garry Sharpe-Young in the introduction to his new book, **Metal: The Definitive Guide** (Jawbone). You certainly can't accuse the guy of not having opinions. And in the nearly 500 pages that follow, he does a fine job of backing up his belief that metal is its own distinct and unique stylistic entity. Divided into 20 sections, each one covering a different aspect or subgenre of the music, this is basically a metal encyclopedia, with biographies and discographies of close to 300 acts. The absence of any '80s hair bands—that's right, no Ratt or Mötley Crüe—suggests a certain snobbishness on the author's part, and a few other non-inclusions had me scratching my head (where the freak's Monster Magnet?), but the indescribably wonderful photo of Fintroll does a lot to make up for such lapses. —MAC RANDALL

