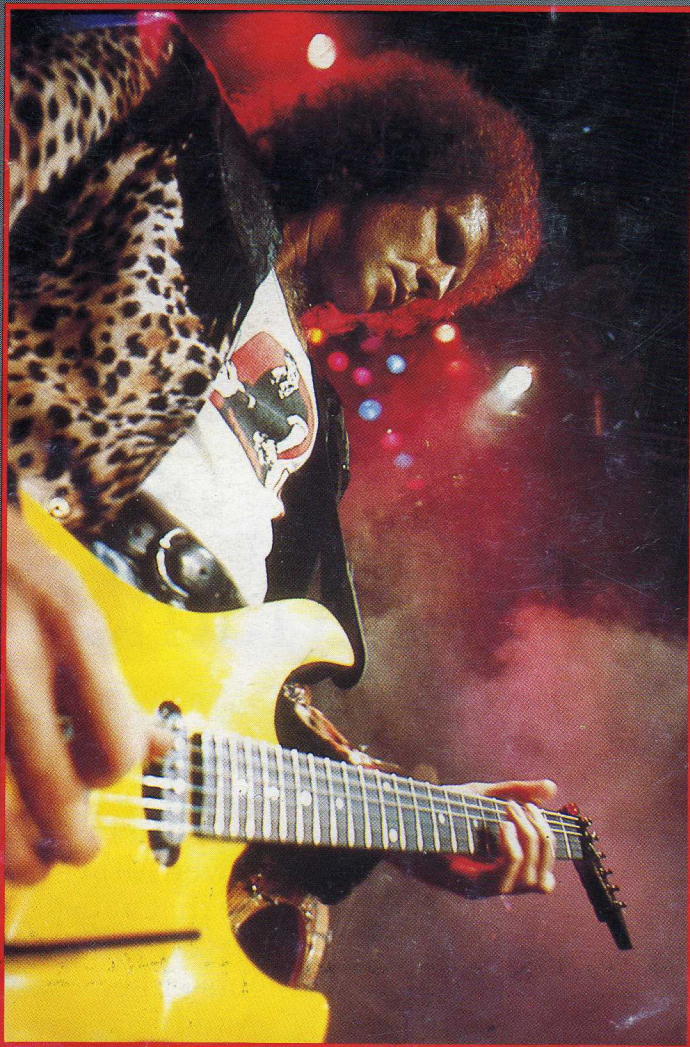


# CANADIAN MUSICIAN

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## FROM STREETHEART TO RED RIDER

By Ken Sinnaeve

**M**y first recording band was Streetheart which I was with from the start to a rather unglorious finish. I made seven records with the band. Several tunes, in particular, "Action" and "Under My Thumb" are considered FM classics.

Over the years I've played through a few different bass amps. My first was an old tweed-style Fender Bassman. It had four inputs and the whole band including the singer used to play through it. Then I had a Sunn amp which sounded great but wasn't very loud.

When I first came to Toronto with Streetheart I had an Acoustic 370 with one 18" speaker. All kinds of problems plagued me with this beast, including too much bottom end spilling around on stage, into the drum mikes, etc., and not being able to get any definition.

Some guys sounded great with this amp but my style of playing (which was pretty busy at the time) didn't match up with it very well. Then I got a Mono-Block and a B.C. Rich Eagle bass from Prakash John. This in combination with a couple of front loaded cabinets and watching Prakash play cleaned up my sound a lot.

The Mono-Block had been "souped-up" by Pete Traynor and certainly sounded a lot better than standard models. Unfortunately, after blowing it up in Fort Rampage, Saskatchewan it was never the same.

I kept those same cabinets, which were custom built from one and a half inch thick wood until the end of Streetheart. At that point I was using the Rich through an Alembic tube pre-amp into a Peavey CS-800 amp driving four 15" JBLs. Unfortunately, I lost all this stuff when the band broke up.

After that I got an older Spector bass from Scott Smith and since I wasn't doing much live stuff, I just went straight into the board and rented a bass rig for each session.

A lot of engineers I've worked with live and in the studio seem to like the sound of this bass direct, but then again they probably say that to all bass players.

When I have used an amp in the studio I usually go for a "tube" type of sound to balance with the clean direct sound. On the early Streetheart stuff I used an SVT. Later on, I used a Galien-Krueger. You can get a slightly overdriven tube sound on it. On the Tom Cochrane album, I went through an H & H with MOS-FET circuitry. It's a ballsy little amp.

Since Red Rider is the first band I've played live with in years (other than the odd bar gig), I've had to start looking for a bass system that will sound great on a big stage and stand up to the rigors of the road. I think I may have found it.

The cabinets are designed and built by Odessa Acoustics which is a subsidiary of Bruit Bleu Sonorisation, a Quebec based sound company. It's basically a bi-amped system. The SW-15 bottoms have two JBL 2225s in them and I used two of these. On top are two MM1-12 cabs with a JBL E120 speaker and a tweeter in each. The boxes are very heavy duty and are finished in industrial strength black epoxy (no wimp leatherette here). You just can't get store-bought stuff made this well. The bottoms are driven by an Ashly FET-500 power-amp and the tops are powered by an Ashly FET-200.

I like MOS-FET amps because unlike most transistor amps they clip smoothly with no spikes or glitches.

I used an Ashly BP-41 pre-amp which has a lot of nice features. It has a presence boost with a pre-set curve that adds warmth as well as highs, a standard three place (bass, mid, treble) E.Q. section and a single band of parametric E.Q. A built-in two way crossover simplifies bi-amplification and there's a built-in headphone amp too.

The direct out is quiet and it has a pre-post switch that allows you to send your signal to the board before or after your E.Q. section.

All in all, a very punchy, warm sounding system that looks great and is extremely roadworthy. Thanks to Gerr Electro Acoustics and Bruit Bleu for specs and co-operation.

Playing live with Red Rider is a lot of fun but it can be tricky. There's a lot of sound on stage, what with three guitars, a wall of keyboards, drums, drum machine, vocals and not to mention me thrashing away underneath. (Sometimes it sounds like Elvis is in the building.) Consequently we're constantly reminding ourselves to be aware of the dynamics in the music which thankfully (on record at least) there are a lot of. It's almost like you have to exaggerate the dynamics live if you want them to be heard. Especially in an arena. I know my own approach to playing changes from the studio to the hockey hall. I tend to play more staccato and with a pick so that the notes don't overlap. I also mute the strings with the heel of my palm, although I do this in the studio too.

On stage I use my E.Q. primarily to cut



Ken Sinnaeve

unwanted frequencies rather than boost. In arenas you want to get red of as much boominess on stage as possible because it seems to come from everywhere anyway, so I try to find the real resonant peaks and cut them.

Most of the time I have the bass through my monitor fairly loud. That way I can turn my system down a bit and get a nice spread between my wedge and my amp. This also helps overall volume on stage because if the other guys are getting blown away by your amp the natural thing to do is turn up themselves or fire you.

I think any bass player will tell you that playing with a good drummer certainly makes a bass player sound better and I've been lucky to play with some of the best including: Matt Frenette on the first two Streetheart albums, Anton Fig on the Partland Bros., Graham Broad, Jorn Anderson and Randall Coryell with Red Rider.

Interestingly, when I was called over to Wales to do the Red Rider record, they had already cut the bed tracks with another bass player, Paul Martinez. Consequently, I put down my bass parts to Graham Broad's drum tracks after he was done. He's a great drummer and I hope to meet him someday.

The Spector was used on all the tunes I played on except for "Boy Inside the Man" on which I used a Steinberger. On "Lasting Song" I played all the choruses and bridge using the Spector and then went back and did all the verses with a Fender fretless. The tag at the end of "River of Stone" is also fretless. On several songs including "Boy" and "River" I tuned the E string down to a D.

(Ken Sinnaeve plays bass with Red Rider).