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Castalia Communications P.O. Box 2503 Petaluma, CA 94953 • 800-777-9977 • fax 800-752-7730 • www.castaliapub.com

The Guitar Poster Turns 30 Inspired by the Woodstock Poster

Petaluma, CA—It was over three decades ago, in early 1979, that a novice guitar player had the inspiration for a poster that would help millions learn to play and become a classic in the music industry.

“I was in college on the GI Bill, taking a guitar class, and had only been playing a few weeks,” explained the producer, Scott Morrison. “I’d been to Woodstock ten years earlier where I’d bought a souvenir, the famous poster showing a dove on a guitar neck. Next to it on my wall I had tacked up a chord chart my teacher handed out along with printouts of the Great Staff, Circle of Fifths, a transposition table and so on.

“One day as I was studying the chord chart I glanced at the Woodstock poster and thought, ‘Wow, if the guitar neck were turned so it was vertical and had all the notes written out, learning would be much easier.’ So I went around to music stores hoping to buy one, but nobody had anything like it.

“So I did some research, and when I read that the Gallup Poll said there were fifteen million guitar players in America I thought I’d stumbled on the proverbial better mousetrap, a can’t-miss million-dollar idea.”

Morrison had been preparing to go to law school when he was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug. He put together a team who knew far more about music, art and graphics than he did, and founded Castalia Communications to publish *The Guitar Poster*.

“A friend who was a guitarist as well as a graphic artist, Jack Nau (later to become vice-president of EMG pickups), thought it was a great idea and we began to develop it,” Morrison said. “We soon recruited a fine art painter, Robert Butters, and instead of a simple graphic like the Woodstock poster it evolved into a combination of educational graphics and fine art.”

Morrison took a music theory class and one day brought the prototype in and asked the class for feedback. Someone said, “If you really want to take this to the next level, you’ve absolutely got to talk to Keith Allen.”

Allen was a local guitar teacher and the Bay Area’s premier studio guitarist who played with everyone from the San Francisco Symphony to the Steve Miller Band and Bonnie Raitt. A few years earlier, while teaching at the Blue Bear School of Music, he developed the C-A-G-E-D system of



***The Guitar Poster™* next to the Woodstock poster that inspired it. The small postcard shows what the Woodstock poster’s original colors were like.**

interlocking moveable chord and scale patterns which was so innovative *Guitar Player Magazine* did a feature article on it in their May, 1975, issue.

“I set up a meeting,” Morrison said. “Keith took one look at the prototype, said ‘I’m in,’ and on the spot he sat down and drew out what was to become the Chord and Scale Table.”

Allen’s deep knowledge of music theory and the guitar elevated the educational concept from a simple compilation of chords, notes of the neck and other musical graphics into a true roadmap to harmony for the guitar that puts the answers up on your wall. Using the poster’s cross-reference diagrams and tables, you can find and play any chord or scale, in any key, anywhere on the neck. From beginners to pros, it has something for all guitar players no matter what their level of accomplishment.

The Guitar Poster made its official debut at the 1981 National Association of Music Merchants show and was an instant hit. To date it has sold over two million copies and counting. The company went on to publish posters for keyboard, rock guitar, saxophone and electric bass as well as a variety of other music education items. All of the products can be seen at the Castalia website, www.castaliapub.com, and are also available in fine music stores everywhere.

“Having been at Woodstock affects me to this very day,” says Morrison. “If my dad had said I couldn’t take the car that weekend I’d have never bought the souvenir that inspired *The Guitar Poster* and I’d probably have ended up becoming a lawyer.”

Over two million guitar players are thankful that he didn’t.