

Meet the 'Blastercaster'!

The idea a hydro-themed guitars originated within the fertile mind of someone at the Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum, some years ago. The story as I hear it today is getting a bit murky and doesn't really fit with my recollection of things, but no matter- the concept is clearly, purely H&RM!

In the past we have auctioned hydro-themed guitars with paint and graphics applied to an otherwise stock guitar- and they were all cool instruments, too! But this guitar- 'The Blastercaster'- is something quite different. This is the first- and perhaps the ultimate- hydro themed *artifact guitar*. This is truly a collectable and valuable piece of history *and* Art.

The 'Blastercaster' was built utilizing re-purposed bits and pieces removed from the historic 1977 Atlas Van Lines unlimited hydroplane currently undergoing a thorough restoration at the museum. With help from Executive Director David Williams, Atlas Crew Chief Don Mock, and fellow crewmen Gail Richardson, Randy Meuller, John Liedle, Phil Lampman and Bob Burd, I was able to salvage usable bits and pieces of the original boat during the restoration process to build this instrument.

Components re-purposed from the "Blue Blaster"

The guitar top laminate comes from the decking that was applied after Acapulco as a cosmetic restoration for display at the Smithsonian Museum. Many thousands of fans paid their respects to the boat, Bill, and the Muncey family as they paused on the causeway to view this decking. If you turn your head, (or turn the guitar upside down) you can see that it contains the top of the upper case 'L' and the top of the lower case 'i' from the word 'Lines'. This artifact came from the port side decking, amidships, and was carefully removed as the restoration began.

The headstock laminate came from a piece of actual original racing deck, donated to the museum. This piece is original to the boat and was removed from the starboard side logo, again amidships. At the museum, we have a photo of Bill standing on that bit of decking. The list of people who knelt on it, worried about it, polished it, and cursed at it reads like an all star lineup of the greats in unlimited racing history. Once upon a time, Dave Sefelt, John Walters, Jim Lucero, Dixon Smith, Jim Harvey, Tim Ramsey, Tim Taffel, Glenn Davis -and Bill and the Muncey family- all pinned their hopes and aspirations to the materials that you see here.

I fashioned a 1/2 inch 'stringer' from a piece of ash stringer material 'harvested' from the starboard side recovery area by Gail Richardson. This artifact was certainly original to the boat and was inlaid into the back of the Blastercaster.

My personal favorite piece on this guitar is the **forearm rest**, fabricated by Atlas crewman Rob Wheeler. He was given the most mangled piece of material imaginable- a chunk of one inch aluminum honeycomb material from the port sponson transom- and he turned into a highly functional piece of Art- typical of Rob Wheeler work.

The last bits of authenticity built into the Blastercaster are the **headplate graphic** and the **back and side paint**. The design for the Blastercaster logo was created from a scan of the original hand painted "Blue Blaster" transom plate cover. The paint matches the paint codes and paint chemistry of the original Atlas Van Lines and comes from the restoration paint locker.

The 'Blastercaster' is not simply an homage to a great piece of racing history. It is a first rate player's instrument, with all the great sonic capability that you would expect from the very best of the breed. The mechanical and electronic components are the best available, including a matched set of hand wound pickups donated by the best pickup builder working today - **Jason Lollar** of Vashon Island (who happens to be a Bill Muncey fan too). The setup, tone and playability will impress the most demanding player- just as jazz musician Bill Muncey would have wanted it.



The 'Blastercaster' is laid upon the deck of the 1982 Atlas Van Lines during pre-assembly in July, 2013.

Gail Richardson photo

Marc Connelly
Luthier, H&RM member since 1995, and Atlas Van Lines crewman.