

**A rare interview from 1988 where Stevie talks about his gear, this has only been partly published in Finland years ago:**

[Stevie talks about his amps and pedals \(mp3\)](#)

[Stevie talks about the "Charlie guitar" \(mp3\)](#)

All the basic info about SRV's guitars and amps is already all over the web (with quite a few mistakes). I will have here some special info about his gear. Some is true, some are rumors I have heard and part of it might be bulls\*\*t, but I will include it here.

## **GUITARS:**

On the "Charley" Stevie had an extra pickup under the pickguard wired to serve as a humbucker. In other word Stevie would have the hum canceled by this hidden pickup.

I've heard he used a old Fender Esquire (like single pickup Telecaster) on "House is Rocking" .

Stevie mostly used Fenders, but he also had few Gibsons and played them earlier in his career, you can see a Gibson ES-335 on the rack in the El Mocambo video and also in the cover of "Soul To Soul" (he never had his #1 on cover of his albums, only inside of "Live Alive" and maybe the guitar in the back of CSTW is #1). He also had a cherry red Epiphone Casino. Stevie also played with a [Gibson Les Paul](#) sometimes....

There is a video of Stevie giving an interview in Japan in 1985 where he played a [Gibson Flying V](#). I don't know if that was his, but given his Albert King adulation I'm sure it was.

Stevie used sometimes the rare 1980 "Hendrix Model" Stratocaster that was basically like the "Anniversary" model but with reverse headstock and an additional body contour on the front. Only 25 of these guitars were ever produced. I don't know if Stevie owned the guitar or borrowed from someone... He often played it on "Superstition" and "Willie the Wimp".

Stevie even but a lefthanded neck to Red. Red originally had a right-handed, rosewood neck. I remember it was late 1986 when Stevie put a lefty neck on Red. In February, 1987 it was lefthanded, you can see that on many photos and videos.

The guitar in the "Texas Flood" album cover is a Tokai TST-50 or TST-80 50's Reissue. I have a poster from where the album cover is painted and you can clearly see the Tokai label, take a look at this [scan from the poster](#). The pickup polepieces seems to be really low, so these might be the Dimarzio VS-1 pickups that are on TST80 model (anyone know??) It is the 50's model with one-piece maple neck and two tone sunburst finish. My brother has one just like that except it's white, and it's a killer guitar (now with Fralin pickups)!!! The neck is really big, compared to it, the SRV model neck is like toothpick! The Tokai neck is not like a half of baseball bat, but more like two whole baseball bats!!! Must be very close to the neck of #1, the SRV signature has smaller neck than the real deal.

The Tokai is very well made guitar, a lot better than most Fender's I've seen. Stevie (and Tommy) endorsed Tokai also in 1985, in [July 1985 Guitar Player add](#) Stevie is with a red maple neck Tokai and a "Tokai #1" (rosewood neck, sunburst with black pick quard ). Stevie was also in the [cover of 1985-86 Tokai catalog](#). I heard there has been a Tokai SRV signature model (anyone???) and that Stevie had an endorsement with Tokai also earlier ??? These guitar must be good (I know they are) because Stevie would have not posed on a full page add with just any guitar, right??

Funny that Fender did "find" Stevie when he was already gone (althought they started to design the

SRV-model when he was alive), I have not seen any Fender adds with Stevie before 1990. Are there??? Stevie must have helped the sales of Stratocaster almost as much as Jimi Hendrix did in 1967, when all of a sudden everyone wanted an old-fashioned Strat and not the new cool premium Fender models like Jazzmaster (Fender said: America's finest electric guitar..) and Jaguar!!!

Stevie had once [special roller saddles](#) on his E- and B-strings, maybe to help with tuning or was he braking too many strings...

#### **PICKS:**

Stevie has used purple D'Addario Delrins Heavy .043", (1.10 mm), purple Dunlop 1.14mm picks and later Fender Heavy picks.

#### **AMPS:**

-SRV used 5751's in the first gain stage of his Fenders to keep that clean but loud sound. (I have tried this with NOS RCA 5751 on my "Dumblefied" Bassman '59 RI and it sounds great!!

Stevie put tape on his amp's grill cloth to eliminate the harsher upper frequencies from the center of the cones. You can see this on many videos and photos.

You can easily say that Dumble was Stevie's main amp from 1983; he recorded Texas Flood with one ("Mother Dumble" a Dumbleland head with 6550 tubes) and after that he bought a Dumble Overdrive Special. You can see the amp on many 1983 videos (a black small head). The ODS was "too much of an amp" for Stevie and he changed it for a Dumble Steel String Singer that was originally designed for steel players with huge headroom and tight low end.

From there on he always had a Dumble or two in his set. In 1988 European Tour he had just his Dumble and a Marshall Major head with 4 x12" cabs, no Fender amps.



*Here is Stevie in Stockholm 28th June 1988 with Marshall Major head and Dumble Steel String Singer with 2 Dumble 4x12" cabs with EV speakers. (photo by Eric Forssen) [Click for bigger photo](#) (315K).*

Stevie's [Dumble Steel String Stinger](#) was custom made for him and they had this tight, loud, clear bottom and very loud and clean tone, they didn't distort much. Stevie used pedals for distortion with Dumbles.

Stevies Dumble SSS had 6550 output tubes and about 150W of clean output.

Stevie also used Marshalls a lot, there was even gigs earlier with just two Marshall Club & Country combos, one 4x10" and other was 2x12". He used mostly Marshall Major heads that are 200w monsters with 4 x KT88 tubes. There was a JCM 800 halfstack that was micked in "In Step" sessions, Stevie also used many (5 I remember) JCM 800's in Pori Jazz 11th July 1985. There he had nothing but these Marshalls and still sounded like SRV.

Pedro Fidel Raggio wrote a mail to Rene Martinez asking for the settings in his Fender Bassman and Rene answered him: input normal 1, volume 8, treble 8, mids 7, bass 6 and presence 8, and that they have 4 EVM's and stock tubes.

Pedro also asked him for SRV Marshall JCM 800 settings and Rene answered him very shortly: lots of treble, mids, bass and volume.



*Stevie with Marshall JCM 800's [Click for a bigger photo](#) (213K) (Photo by Ari Niemi)*

Photo from another concert the same day with [tons of Marshall JCM 800 combos and tops](#).

In [Sweden 1984 Stevie used his Dumble](#) with 4x12" cab and a Silver Face Fender Twin Reverb to drive the Vibratone. He had a TS-9 and Vox wah-wah and a [MXR Loop Selector](#) as a bypass switch for pedals.

Stevie used EVM speakers in his amps and had to replace the chipboard Fender baffle for a thick plywood to handle the heavy (and loud) EV-speakers. The EV speakers can handle a LOT of power and don't distort like vintage speakers. His Super Reverbs had these and I believe his Dumble cabinets had these too. He also changed the 15" speaker for his Vibroverb (that he later used just to drive his Vibratone) Stevie used JBL E130-8 speaker, not the original D- model. Stevie didn't like the tone of speaker distortion and those powerful speakers also made his tone so clear and powerful.

SRV used to prefer diode rectifiers to keep the bass tight and to have more headroom and less compression.

About Stevie's amp settings, there are not much info about it, but on some photos you see some settings and you can also try out the SRV settings if you have similar gear.

Stevie had a lot of bright high-end that makes the tone cut through the band and it makes the tone very clear also, you hear every note and nuance. But the tone was not thin because he also had a lot of middle on it. Here is one Super Reverb setting that is also on some photos:

Guitar to Vibrato Channel to the 1st jack: Bright switch on (up), volume 5,5 (already slightly distorting) Middle 9, Treble 9, Bass 2. Stevie did not use the Reverb or Tremolo (actually it was

disconnected).

The tone is very bright if you play with it at your bedroom, but add a hard hitting drummer and a bass player with 200W amp, use your neck pickup mostly with a big tone rosewood neck Strat and you are there!!! Stevie also adjusted his volume and tone a lot, with volume down the tone gets darker and you can always fine-tune the tone with your tone knob.

As you see the Bass is low (2), but you can't set it higher if you play hard, because the low end gets farty and too loose. There is still nice low end with Super Reverb with Bass on 2 and Stevie also had Vibroverbs with 15" speakers, Dumble with 4x12" cab and Marshalls so there was no lack of low-end with his rig!

The [Dumble](#) settings are also known, but there is not much help for others than Dumble owners and I guess there are not too many of them ;-)

He basically set them for a very loud clean tone (and the clean on Dumble is a KILLER!!!)

Ross William Perry e-mailed me that Stevie sometimes miked the amps also from the back for huge tone.

The Vibratone must be miked with two mics for true Leslie effect, but I have heard that this back miking has been used also in studio with open back combos. Don't know if Stevie did it with his recordings.

## **EFFECTS:**

### **Basics:**

**[Ibanez Tube Screamer](#) (TS-9 or TS-10) before Vox wah-wah.**

**If Stevie used [Fuzz Face](#) that was before Tube Screamer.**

**Earlier Stevie used [MXR Loop Selector](#) to bypass effects.**

I just got few photos from a small club at 1984 Scandinavian Tour that were took at Sweden.

Some are "gear photos" and were took just to see what gear Stevie played.

He had: Ibanez TS-9 (you can see very well it is a TS-9, not a TS-808) into Vox wah-wah. Stevie had the TS-9 before wah-wah. There is also [MXR Loop Selector](#) between Vox and TS-9 and he used it as bypass switch to bypass the effects and to go direct to amp.

He had there late 70's master volume silverface Fender Twin Reverb and on top of that a Fender Vibratone. There is some masking tape in the front grille, but no microphones in front of the amp. The Vibratone is micked and next to the "Fender-tower" there is a early 80's 4x12" Marshall cabinet that seems to have microphone in front of it.

I can't see any other amp there (maybe the Dumble was too much for a small club) and the Twin must be driving the Vibratone and the Marshall cabinet. I have that show on tape and the Vibratone is not on very often.

Vibratone has an switching system when the Vibratone is shut off, the amp's speakers were switched in (this time the Marshall cab). When the Vibratone is turned on a special filter send the extreme highs and lows to the amplifier's speaker and most of the tone came from Vibratone.

On 1988 European Tour Stevie only had his Dumble head and a 200 watt Marshall Major that is neither an amp for big distortion so he had his distortion from a Ibanez Tube Screamer TS-10. Stevie used Tubescreamers earlier with Fenders for gain using much output and very little

distortion (that is the best way to use these) but on one photo you can see him set his TS-10 as: (these are TS10 numbers) Drive:5 Tone:+3 Level:7.

The Tube Screamer settings are different what Stevie used earlier, there is actually more distortion from the pedal and that shows that he had quite clean tone from the amps. Both amps are famous for big headroom and his big 1988 tone must be from the amps just on the edge and the distortion is from TS-10. With smaller Fender amps he used earlier that are easily distorting by themselves, Stevie needed the TS only to boost the signal for leads.

Here is [another great photo](#) where you see his effects, first a [Red Dallas Arbiter Fuzz Face](#) into Ibanez TS-10 into Vox wah-wah.

Here the settings are different: Drive must be below 2 (or over 9) because you can't see the green notch, Tone: 0 and Level: 5. So here he has less distortion, less treble and less output...

This comes from reliable source: When Stevie was asked in early 80's about what he thought about the "new" (TS-9 Tubescreamer ) compared to the older one (TS-808) .... and this may surprise most people that read the misinformation through the years that SRV favored the 808, Stevie said that he liked them both but the "new" TS-9 one better because it had slightly more bite !!!! and this is first hand info from the Horses mouth!!!!

Paul Crowther from Crowther Audio told me that his friend Midge Marsden stayed with SRV at his Dallas home for about 2 months, and Midge noticed that Stevie had a Hot Cake amongst his equipment. Midge was able to tell him that he knew the person (Paul Crowther) who made them. So..SRV definitely owned one...but I'm not sure how often he was using it. Hot Cake is a ticket to a great SRV tone IF you have a good amp to start with. There is NO pedal that could get THE tone with moderate amp!!!

Octavia: Stevie started using Octavia in 1989. First he had a Roger Mayer Octavia and then Cesar Diaz found some NOS Tycobrahe Octavia's and Stevie started using those. Stevie used one from then on on live shows (he never recorded with one). Stevie used Octavia mostly in "Voodoo Chile (slight return)", but also on "Mary Had A Little Lamb", "Wall Of Denial", "Going Down", "I'm Leaving You "(commit a crime)" and "Riviera Paradise" !!!!!

You can see (and hear on Voodoo Chile) the Roger Mayer Octavia on the DVD that comes with the SRV Box.

It is the grey rocket shape pedal far left from Stevie.

In late -89 Stevie added Fuzz Face (first Roger Mayer Classic Fuzz, then vintage Fuzz Face and later Diaz modified Fuzz) to his pedal board that stayed there until the end.

UK Guitar mag (Feb 2000) had few nice photos I have not seen before, one of his [pedal board](#) with; Vox wah-wah, Dallas Arbiter Fuzz Face, Roger Mayer Octavia(!!!), Ibanez TS-10 and pedals for Vibratone + some homemade box with switches, maybe to switch on/off amps or bypass the pedals.

BTW his pedal boards (it's in two pieces) look very primitive, nothing like what is standard today. I have thought it's funny SRV used TS-10, that is not very highly rated pedal, because back then late 80's / 1990 TS-808 was not an expensive hard to find pedal. Stevie used a lot of money to guitars/amps/ other pedals, so he must have been very happy with the TS-10 tone or otherwise he would have bought a used (not vintage at that time) TS-808 that everybody praise so highly now.

Stevie also used Roger Mayer Super Vibe and Noise Gate (both in rack). Roger told he did not meet Stevie but he wishes he would have.

On a show at Daytona at 25th May 1987 Stevie used an [electro-harmonix Hot Tubes](#) as his prime overdrive, you can clearly see that from the video of that show and Stevie kicks it on and off quite a few times.

The big questions is "what pedals would Stevie use now??" There are tons of great boutique pedals with true bypass and great low end and stuff....

PLAYING:

As you all know Stevie was not just running pentatonic scales in the key of E over 12 bar blues. There are many elements in his playing, at Orpheum Theater, Boston in 23 Nov. 1986 Stevie played quite a many bars of authentic reggae rhythm on Life Without You (it has also these nice high pitch notes made with his ring a'la Riviera Paradise).

On 8th of April 1985 Stevie sits in with Eric Johnson at Fast and Cools, Dallas, TX They played some blues jam, then Come On (part1) and Voodoo Chile(s.r.). Maybe I can have some MP3 here one day from this show.

Here is some stuff Ross William Perry send me:

*" I met Jim Gaines a couple months ago when my friend Bernard Allison invited me to come hang out in the studio while he was recording. Jim Gaines was producing him and had some very interesting stories to tell about Stevie. Jim said that Stevie was so loud in the studio during In Step that the pipes in the walls were rattling and the mics were picking that up. They had to have somebody come in and shoot foam/insulation down the insides of the walls to isolate the rattle. He also said that the lights that were in the ceiling in the control room were shaking loose and falling down from the vibrations! Jim was talking about his recording amps too. He said he had a Bassman, Super, a couple of Dumbles, Vibroverbs, Twins and Quad Reverbs, Marshalls and a few others he couldn't remember. He said that they had a couple of the smaller amps in another room because they couldn't keep up to the other amps - he said those were a little gibson amp that looked like a table and a vibratone (leslie) and something else. He said that they had a problem when they were recording because they were getting a hum transferred to tape. He said it was some kind of magnetic field or microwaves that were created by having so many amps running at the same time. They solved that by building a cage that would cancel out the microwaves. He also said that someone had come into the studio and told Stevie (I think it was Eric Johnson) that the reason he was getting a crappy tone is because the guitar cords weren't flowing in the right direction (yes I read your article about this cable problem - it is true, I've tried it!) so Jim had to go to Radio Shack and get some cables that already had arrows on them marking the signal flow. That's about as much as I can remember about the stories Jim told me."*

Then he told:

*" I'm a friend of a guy who used to work at a local guitar shop in my area. He said that he got to see Stevie's amps and look at them up and close. He told me that Stevie's Super Reverbs had been modified for 150 watts and had 4 power tubes (I imagine 6550's) instead of 2 and had bigger transformers also. They had 4 - 10" EV speakers in them. He also said he looked at the amp settings - the volume was on 4, treble on 5 1/2 with bright switch on and the mid around 7. He didn't remember where the bass was set at. He told me that he thought his pre amp in the Super was stock and that it was modded only in the power section to give more headroom."*

Well, with these 4x10" EV speakers you can handle a lot of power, but it's not a minor mod to make the Super work with 4 power tubes. I've never heard this before, but it can be true.....

More from Ross:

*>Stevie had a short time delay between one of his amps - he had it set for about 10-20ms behind the original signal. This helped give a little more beef to the sound supposedly. I've also heard he used dummy coils in his strats. I've listened to some live recordings from around '89 and it sounds more like a noise gate to me. The noise stops unless he rubs his hand on the strings, and then you can hear the buzz. I've noticed some photos from around '89 that show that he had a small rack - like a 3 or 4 space rack. I couldn't see what was in it from the pictures, but I suspect if he had a noise gate, it would be in that rack."*

Yes, Stevie had a Roger Mayer Noise Gate in a rack, there was also Roger Mayer Supervibe effect that later evolved to Voodoo-Vibe pedal.

This is from Terry Carlson who used to drive the equipment truck for SRV:

*"...during the 4 north american tours I did with SRV, I got to know Rene Martinez on a personal level, I still talk with him occasionally.... Rene was Stevies guitar tech and through Rene I learned Stevies rig inside and out.... I was looking at Ross's rig and noticed the mods done to his Strat, they are right in line with Stevies # 1 (he referred to his famous beat up guitar with the mailbox letters on it as "Number One"), which was a '59 Fender Tobacco Sunburst Strat that made its way into a pawn shop in Dallas where Stevie eventually found it...*

*He always said that the thing about # 1 was its neck, "it just felt right" he said years later when guitar player magazine interviewed Rene and wanted to do a piece on Stevies signature axe, they disassembled the guitar and found out by running the numbers back to Fender and then to Leo himself at G&L that the guitar was one of 5 ever made by Fenders R & D shop in LA....*

*The only difference between Stevies Strat and others made that year, were modifications to the neck. It was a little broader and thinner, funny how Stevie knew all that time from just feel that his axe was different than all the rest....*

*Unfortunately in 1990 while on tour with Joe Cocker shortly before SRV's death, that guitar was hit by a set piece that fell from the side of the stage in Holmdell, New Jersey at the Garden State Performing Arts Center, I watched from behind the stage as the neck was snapped off of it when it was struck. Stevie died only a couple of months later. It was as if that guitar was destined to be played only by Stevie. These memories are giving me chills, I'll defer to another subject. I see Ross is using a couple of Super Tube Screemers, those were a big part of Stevies sound along with an original Fuzz Face and an Octavia....*

*He mostly played through Howard Dumble Amps sitting on top of Fender super twins, and a couple of 4 X cabinets as well, a rotoverb, a leslie, and a vibroverb....He also had a couple of miscellaneous Marshall JCM 100's with 4X bottoms....they usually didn't last long before they blew up, mostly the only reason he played through them at all was if one of his Dumble amps had gone down.... Stevie had a couple of Amp techs on call who would fly out to repair stuff on the road, he was brutal on his equipment and it cost him a fortune to keep it all up and running... An oddball piece in his rig was a Nashville "Steel String Singer" amp, I think thats the right name anyway...I never saw him plug into it, but he carried it with him every tour... "*

*"Stevie claimed that he learned how to play Voodoo Chile(slight return) in a dream.... He said when he was first learning the song he was having difficulty with some parts of the song and just wasn't getting it. He agonized and stressed until he had a block about it and couldn't go in further in the song and would wind up blowing it over and over, unable to get through it correctly. I don't know, but I would imagine it was over timing and tone, etc. Anyway, he said he had a dream one night and Jimi Hendrix was showing him how to play the parts he was having trouble with. He got up out of bed and "nailed" it. Pretty weird, huh?*

*2) Number One had a bolt-on neck, the accident in New Jersey that damaged Number One was pretty much limited to the neck being broken. Rene bolted on another neck, but Stevie said it wasn't*

*the same. He said it didn't feel good to him and didn't enjoy playing it anymore. He was extremely bummed about the whole thing. He and Rene went up to Manny's Music in NYC and wound up purchasing a '62 or '63 Strat that he seemed to like. In fact the last shows he ever did he wound up playing that guitar quite abit. He still brought Number One out on stage and played it because of course everybody identified him with that guitar, but he wasn't enjoying it anymore.*

*3) Was there anything secret about his rig? No. Believe it or not it was very simple and straight forward. Charlie and Rene re-wound the pickups I believe, I know that he used a simple 5-way switch. Of course the whammy bar was moved to the other side of the pick gaurd. He played Gibson jumbo frets with #10 strings. He w*