

The Designer

Stewart Edward Ward, born 1947 in Nottingham. I still think of myself as a midlander! My dad was from Calverton, outside Nottingham but my mother was from Beckenham, Kent. They met whilst my dad, a Grenadier Guard (3rd Battalion), was stationed at Kempton Park and Buckingham Palace during World War II.

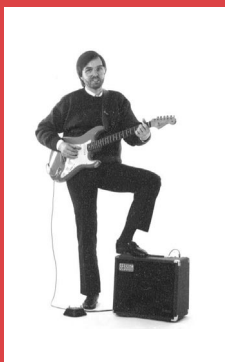
My parents moved when I was two years old to Ashford, Middlesex. Then when I was seven, we moved again to Hayling Island, Hampshire. My parents became the owners the Regal Cinema there, and during the winter, when the cinema was closed for three days a week, they ran a rock music club every other Monday. We used to have all the top local bands.

I took up playing guitar when I was thirteen and my first guitar was a Hohner 'Holbourn'. The neck went banana shaped after it was a year old! My next guitar was the Burns 'Artist'. Then my father bought me a pink Fender Strat - he bought himself a Hammond B3 with Leslie cabinet.

When I was eighteen, I left home and lived in Portsmouth where I studied electronics whilst working for Marconi on defence equipment. I hold HNC and C&G qualifications.

During this time, I started a soul band called 'The Soul Society'. We became one of the top three bands in the area. The others were 'Simon Dupree and the Big Sound', who had a number one hit with 'Kites' and 'The St Louis Checks'. Simon Dupree went on to become 'Gentle Giant'.

I met a girl from Basingstoke one late evening in Southsea... blah, blah... and we eventually married and opened a hairdressing salon in 1976. In 1979 I got fed up with my job and started Session amps. In 1986 my wife and I parted and I then teamed up with Gill, who had worked with me as Sales manager at Session.



Upper left: Stewart with '62 pink Strat. Photo 1987.



Lower left: Stewart aged 16 pictured with his Burns Artist. At that time Marshall had just started making amps... and I was making them in my spare time before this.

Product testing

Unlike many other companies, I personally take prototypes of new gear to jam sessions to ensure they will stand up to the rigours of life in the real world. This also confirms that the voicing is right for live use too, not just sounding great at home or in the workshops.

In the picture below, I have a blue Fender Squire Strat which is fitted with our special '62 tonally match pickup set. I do not use valuable guitars as people believe it's the guitars which make the tone they hear, this way the amps get the credit.

It also has a prototype MultiTone 2 tone module which we plan to fit on our own make of guitars. They will be announced at a later date.

The jam below is held every Wednesday at The Court House pub in Havant just east of Portsmouth. I still like to play and keep in touch with some of my old 'sixties' guitar playing chums. So if you're in the area pop in and say hello!

